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HEAVY METAL
The adult illustrated fantasy magazine
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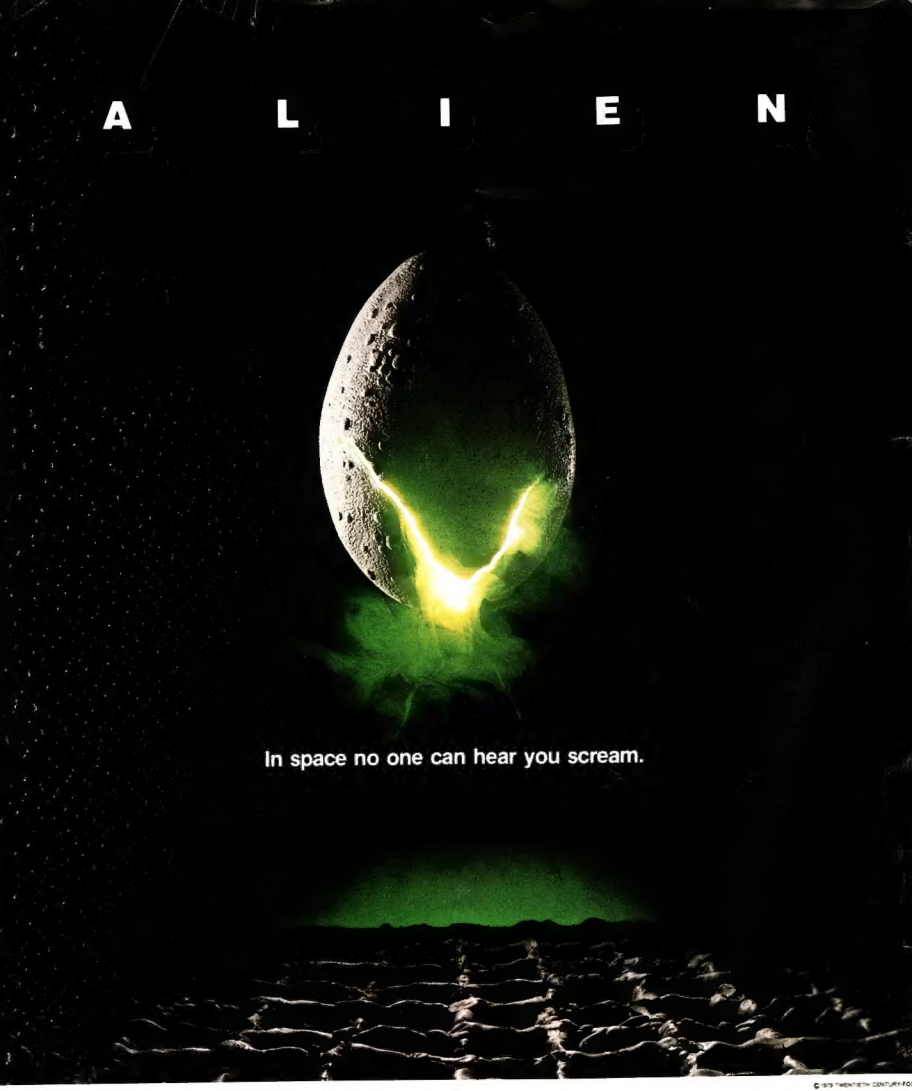

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Vol. III, No. 3

HEAVY METAL

July 1979

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Front cover, Night on Bald Mountain, by **Richard Corben** and **Rick Courtney**

Back cover, A Boy Named Sue, by **Caza**

"The Great Trap III," by Denis Sire, "The Airtight Garage of Jerry Cornelius," by Moebius, "Shelter," by Chantal Montellier, "Telefield," by Macedo, "Only Connect," by Alias,and "A Boy Named Sue" are all from *Metal Hurlant*, copyright © 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979. *Metal Hurlant* is published by L. F. Editions, Les Humanoides Associés, Paris. All rights are reserved.

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There's some confusion about where this photograph was actually taken. Rumor has it that it was shot about seven weeks back in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. A family of five is shown fleeing from nuclear fallout to the great beyond.

Yet some say it's all in the lighting. Who knows?

Some real nice U.S. of A. material in this issue. Lots of spaceships, astronauts, and 'droids. Could this be the coming trend? Neal Adams and Michael Hinge collaborate on one. "Starcrown" and "Telefield" continue with intergalactic ribaldry, and the late Vaughn Bodé's "Zooks" begins.

Figured you all have been gnomed to death, what with the influx of gnome books, gnome-mobiles and the long-awaited, glow-in-the-dark gnomie condoms. In the pages to follow, you will meet an old drinking gnome of mine, Ecch—rabble-rouser and an avid reader of smut, whose only worthy substitute for audacity and charm is Harlan Ellison.

So light up, preferably a meerschaum, sit back, and enjoy.

—J.S.

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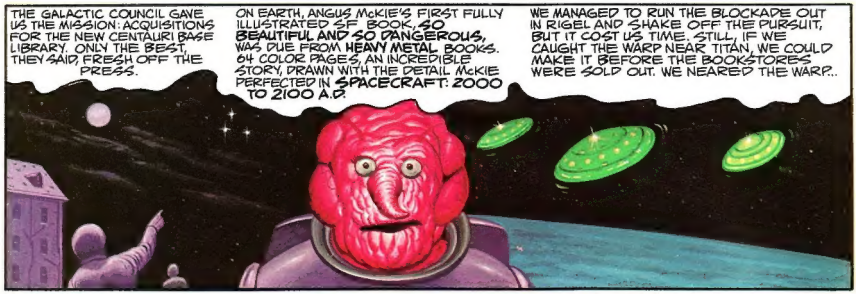
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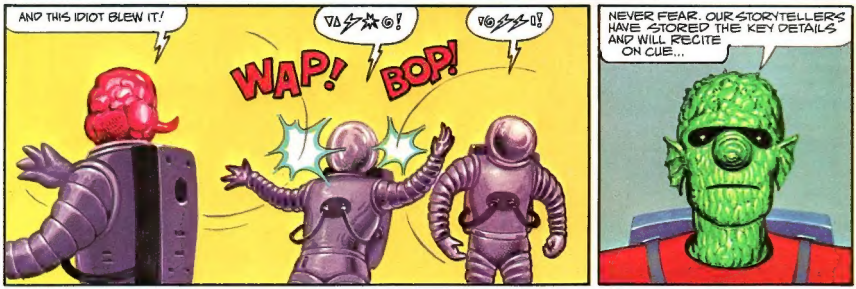
WE MANAGED TO RUN THE BLOCKADE OUT IN RIGEL AND SHAKE OFF THE PURSUIT, BUT IT COST US TIME. STILL, IF WE CAUGHT THE WARP NEAR TITAN, WE COULD MAKE IT BEFORE THE BOOKSTORES WERE SOLD OUT. WE NEARED THE WARP..



IT IS AN ODDBALL COLLECTION OF HUMAN HITCHHIKERS ABOARD THE ALIEN SPACESHIP, WHICH MAY BE DESCRIBED AS... AS.... APOLOGIES, MISTRESS, BUT ONE REALLY MUST HAVE THE BOOK TO APPRECIATE ITS SPLENDOR.
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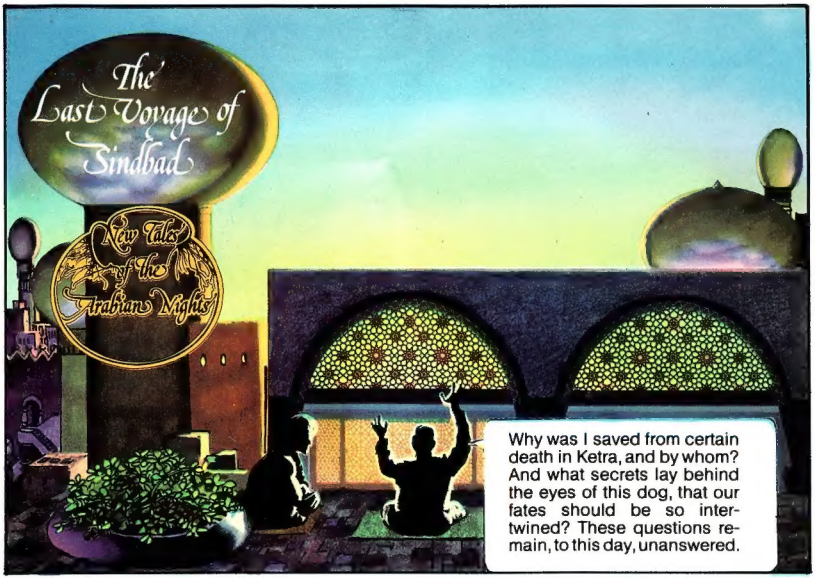
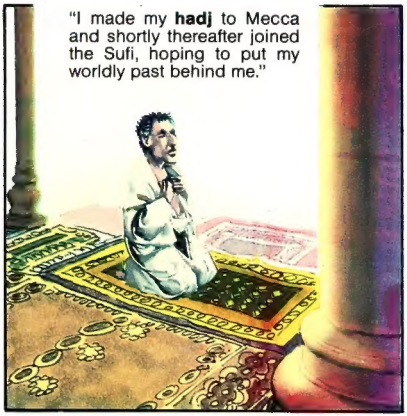

The Last Voyage of Sindbad
New Tales of the Arabian Nights
Why was I saved from certain death in Ketra, and by whom? And what secrets lay behind the eyes of this dog, that our fates should be so intertwined? These questions remain, to this day, unanswered.

"But I do know this—the dog taught me many things. From him I learned the simple pleasures, to accept gracefully my place in the world . . ."
© 1979 Richard Corben and Jan Strnad

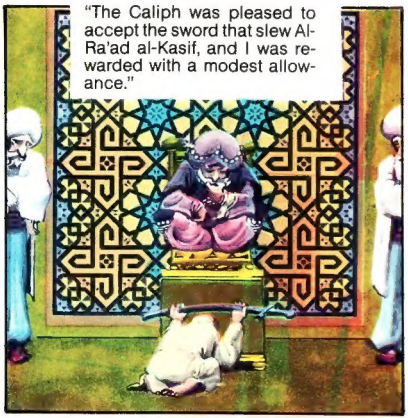
". . . and he was easy for even a beginner to learn to love. And I—who barely knew how to love a **simple** creature—had once claimed to love a woman!"

"In the months that followed I came to trust in the wisdom of Allah. I realized that Zulaykha had been taken from me for a reason . . . and though I might never know that reason, still I accepted it and vowed to make myself worthy of her safe return."

"I made my **hadj** to Mecca and shortly thereafter joined the Sufi, hoping to put my worldly past behind me."



"The Caliph was pleased to accept the sword that slew Al-Ra'ad al-Kasif, and I was rewarded with a modest allowance."



A year ago the dog died a natural death—a fate I would gladly share. Perhaps in Paradise I'll be reunited with my dear Zulaykha—if such is the Will of Allah.

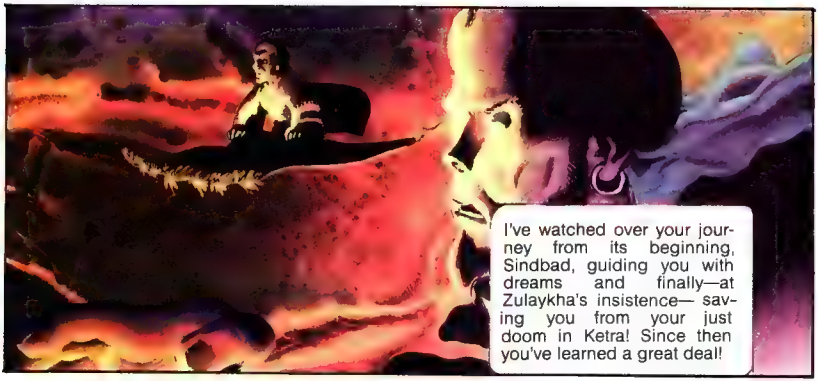
And if a stranger should offer you that gift now, though it meant a lengthy voyage, would you make the journey?

It would be the answer to my prayers. . . .

Then look at me, Sindbad the Sufi, and know that your quest approaches its end. . . .

My true name is **Zu'l Janahayn,** King of All Kings of the Jinn, Servant of Allah, and great-uncle to the woman you seek—your wife, Zulaykha!
Bismallah!
In the guise of a bird I watched you the night of Id al-Fitr! Your childish actions enraged me, Sindbad . . .
. . . and I acted to protect my niece from your rash and selfish behavior! That very night you ran afoul of the Jinni Al-Ra'ad al-Kasif!

I stole Zulaykha from you, and though she begged for you and pleaded your case, I refused to return her to a man who placed **himself** above all others!


I've watched over your journey from its beginning, Sindbad, guiding you with dreams and finally—at Zulaykha's insistence— saving you from your just doom in Ketra! Since then you've learned a great deal!

I've never trusted prodigal sons, Sindbad, and I am far too wise to expect these changes to last! But while they do . . .

. . . let you be reunited!
Zulaykha!
Old ways die hard, Sindbad! **Watch yourself!**

And so, through humility and service to Allah, Sindbad achieved his heart's desire and at last found contentment and peace.

Shahrazad
Dunyazad? Are you here, my sister?
I hope these many nights have taught you something, Dunyazad, and that you'll give up your thoughts of adventure. They will, after all, avail you nothing.
Dunyazad?
The End

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THE GREAT TRAP

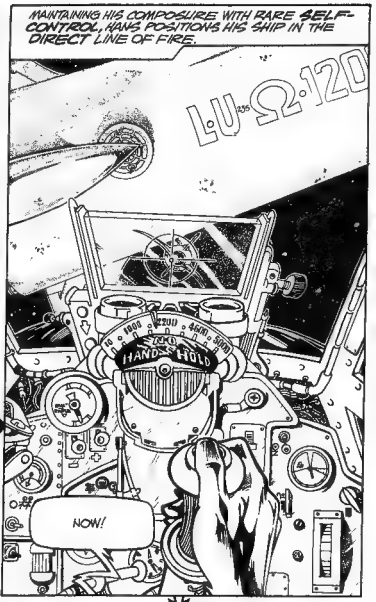
PART 3

STORY SO FAR... BLINDED BY HIS DESIRE FOR REVENGE, HANS STORCH FLINGS HIS SPACESHIP INTO THE MIDST OF THOSE FROM THE DIABOLICAL PLANET IN DEFIANCE OF ALL DANGER!!!!

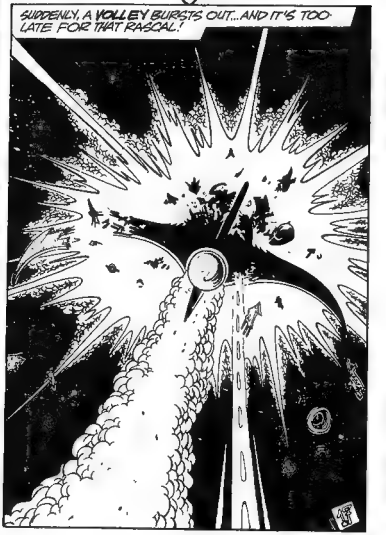
HANS STORCH'S BEE-BUL SPITS OUT ITS BULLETS, PULVERIZING THE COCKPIT OF THE HELPLESS REBEL...
WHAT A MAD-MAN! HE'S GOING TO RAM RIGHT INTO THE FISH MAN'S SHIP!
GARRGLE!
GLUB

.. BUT, IN A FLASH, HANS PULLS OUT OF HIS TRAJECTORY!!!
THE OTHER TWO REFUSE TO FIGHT, BLOODY COWARDS... YOU WON'T.. HELL AND DAMNATION.. WHAT'S

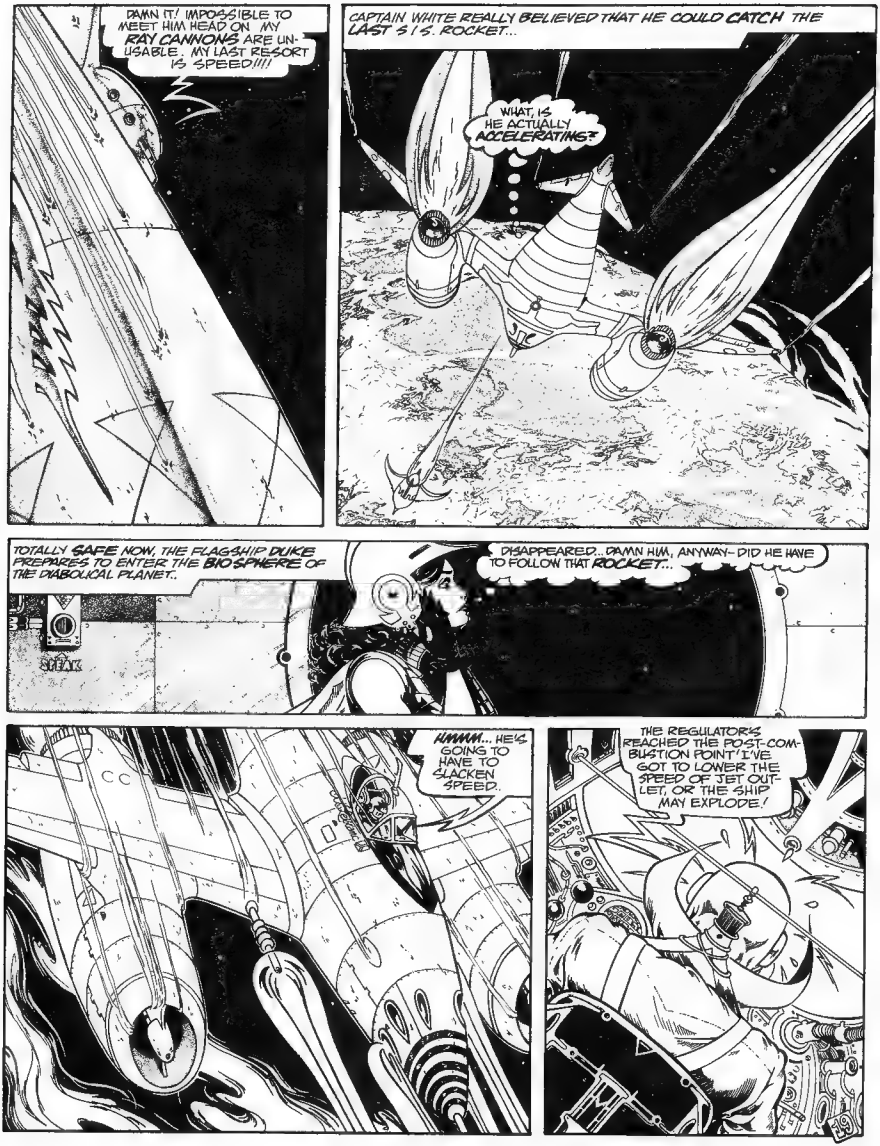
CEASE FIRE!!!!... OR IT'LL RAM RIGHT INTO US!
WHAT?


MAINTAINING HIS COMPOSURE WITH RARE SELF-CONTROL, HANS POSITIONS HIS SHIP IN THE DIRECT LINE OF FIRE.
L·U·Ω·120
HANDS HOLD
NOW!

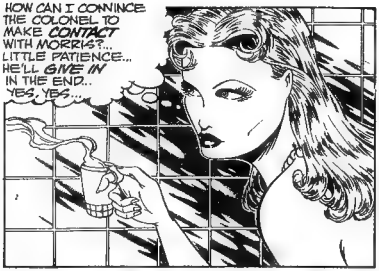
ONCE THE CREW OF THE DUKE REALIZES THAT HANS CAN HANDLE THE ROCKET SHIP, THEIR GUNS ARE SILENCED...
YOU PIRATE! YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD ESCAPE ME!

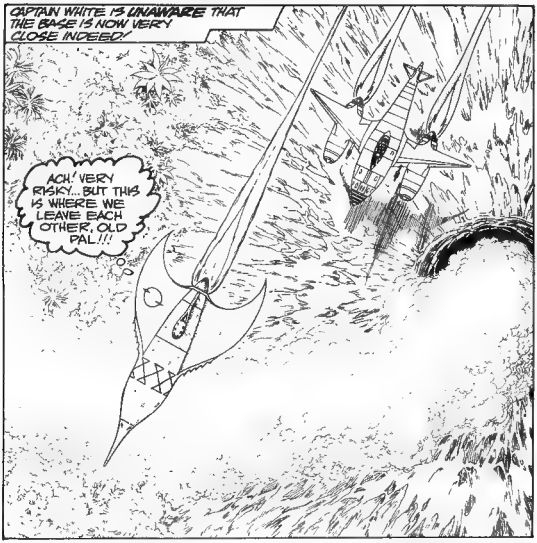

SUDDENLY, A VOLLEY BURSTS OUT...AND IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT RASCAL!

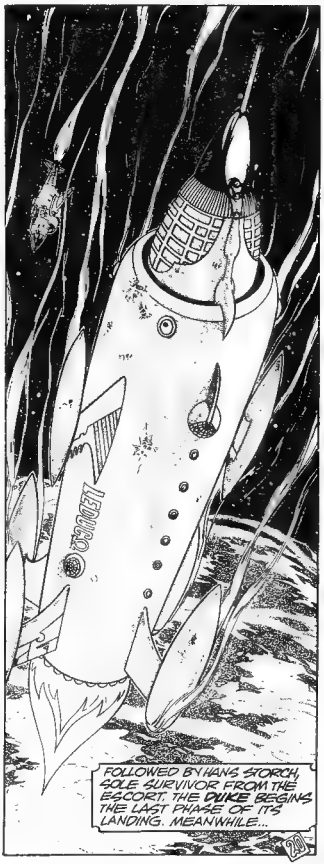
WELL, THAT CHARACTER WON'T BE GIVING ANYONE ELSE A BAD TIME. THE DUKE IS INTACT, OR ALMOST. THAT JUST LEAVES ONE OF THEM OUT THERE SOMEWHERE..
THERE IT IS. WHITE SEEMS TO WANT TO TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF. A LONE ENEMY... JUST WHAT HE CAN HANDLE..!
ACTUALLY, MORRIS, AT FULL NEUTRON, IS DIVING AFTER THE FUGITIVE.
LOOKS LIKE HE'S LEADING ME BACK TO HIS BASE.
MEANWHILE, ON MERCURY, VIOLETTA TAKES OFF HER HYDROGRESSIVE OUTFIT.. HER CONVALESCENCE IS OVER.
WHAT A STRANGE SENSATION IT IS TO FEEL AIR AGAIN...
OH, MORRIS, WHY ARE YOU SO FAR AWAY...
ACH! THE BASTARD'S CATCHING UP!


DAMN IT! IMPOSSIBLE TO MEET HIM HEAD ON. MY RAY CANNONS ARE UNUSABLE. MY LAST RESORT IS SPEED!!!!
CAPTAIN WHITE REALLY BELIEVED THAT HE COULD CATCH THE LAST S/S. ROCKET...
WHAT, IS HE ACTUALLY ACCELERATING?
TOTALLY SAFE NOW, THE FLAGSHIP DUKE PREPARES TO ENTER THE BIOSPHERE OF THE DIABOLICAL PLANET..
DISAPPEARED.. DAMN HIM, ANYWAY- DID HE HAVE TO FOLLOW THAT ROCKET...
HMMM... HE'S GOING TO HAVE TO SLACKEN SPEED.
THE REGULATOR'S REACHED THE POST-COMBUSTION POINT! I'VE GOT TO LOWER THE SPEED OF JET OUTLET, OR THE SHIP MAY EXPLODE!

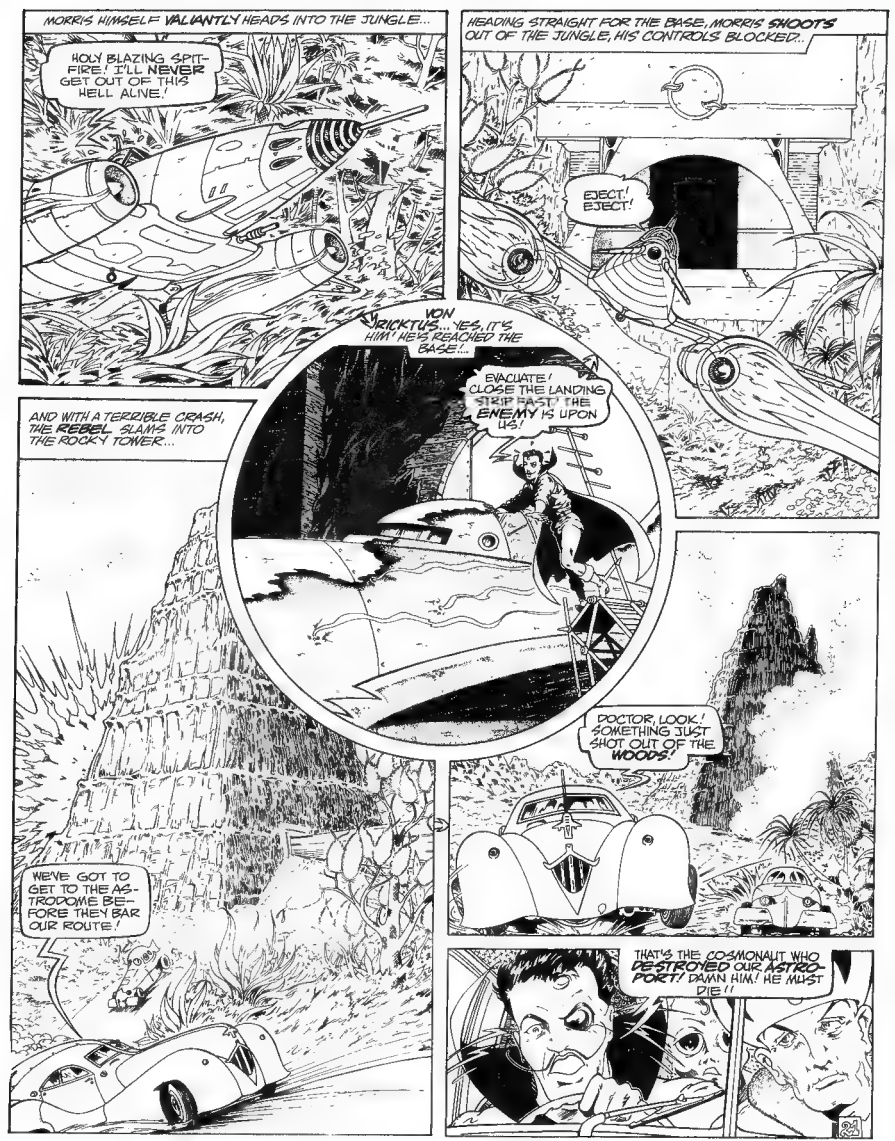
HA! GOOD! THAT CRAZY REBEL COULDN'T HAVE KEPT UP THAT ABSURD SPEED FOR MORE THAN FIFTEEN MINUTES! MMM!!! I HOPE THAT THIS REBEL PILOT HAS THE INTELLIGENCE TO LEAD ME TO HIS SECRET BASE... OTHERWISE, HE'LL GET HIS!

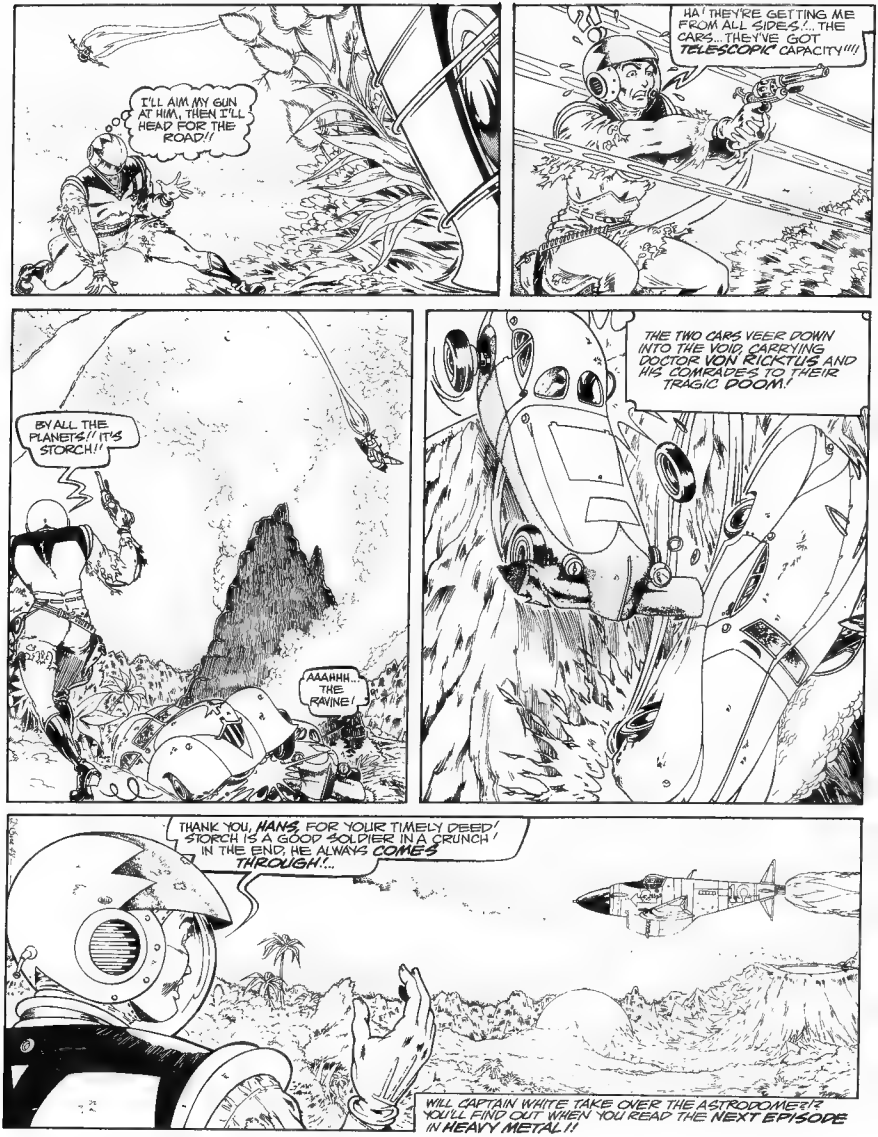

HOW CAN I CONVINCE THE COLONEL TO MAKE CONTACT WITH MORRIS?... LITTLE PATIENCE... HE'LL GIVE IN IN THE END.. YES, YES...

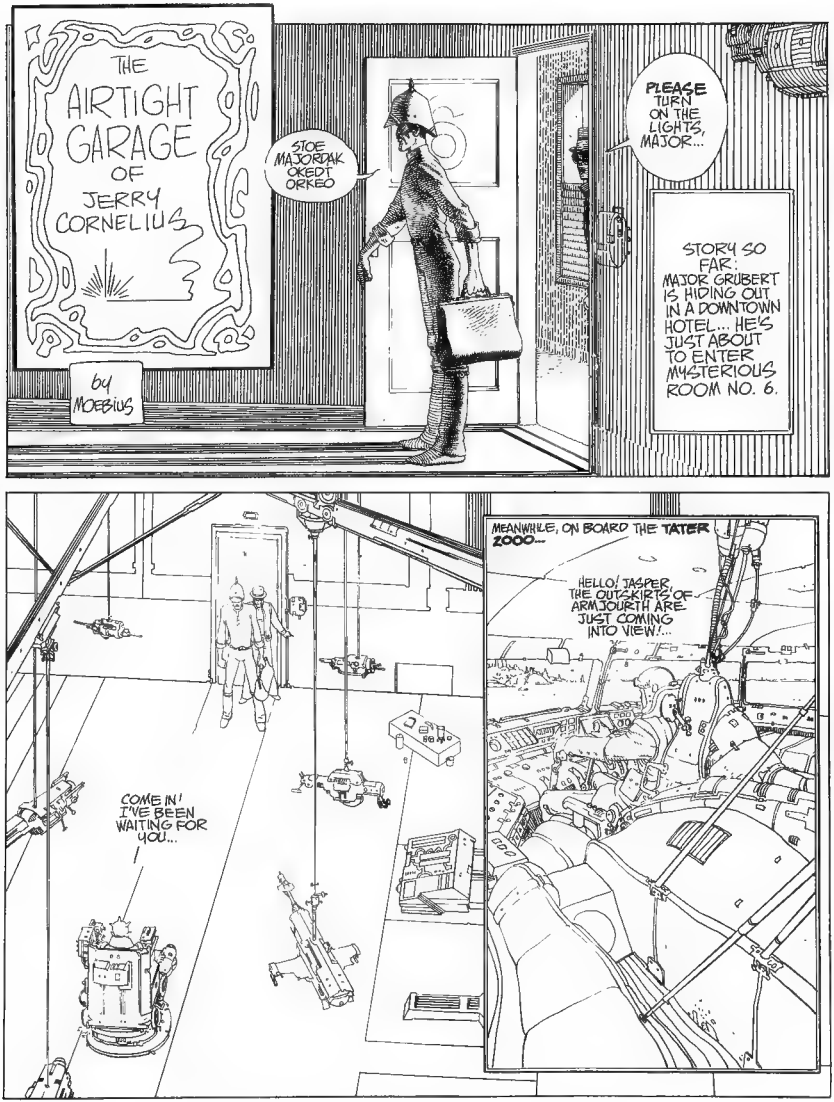

CAPTAIN WHITE IS UNAWARE THAT THE BASE IS NOW VERY CLOSE INDEED!
ACH! VERY RISKY... BUT THIS IS WHERE WE LEAVE EACH OTHER, OLD PAL!!!

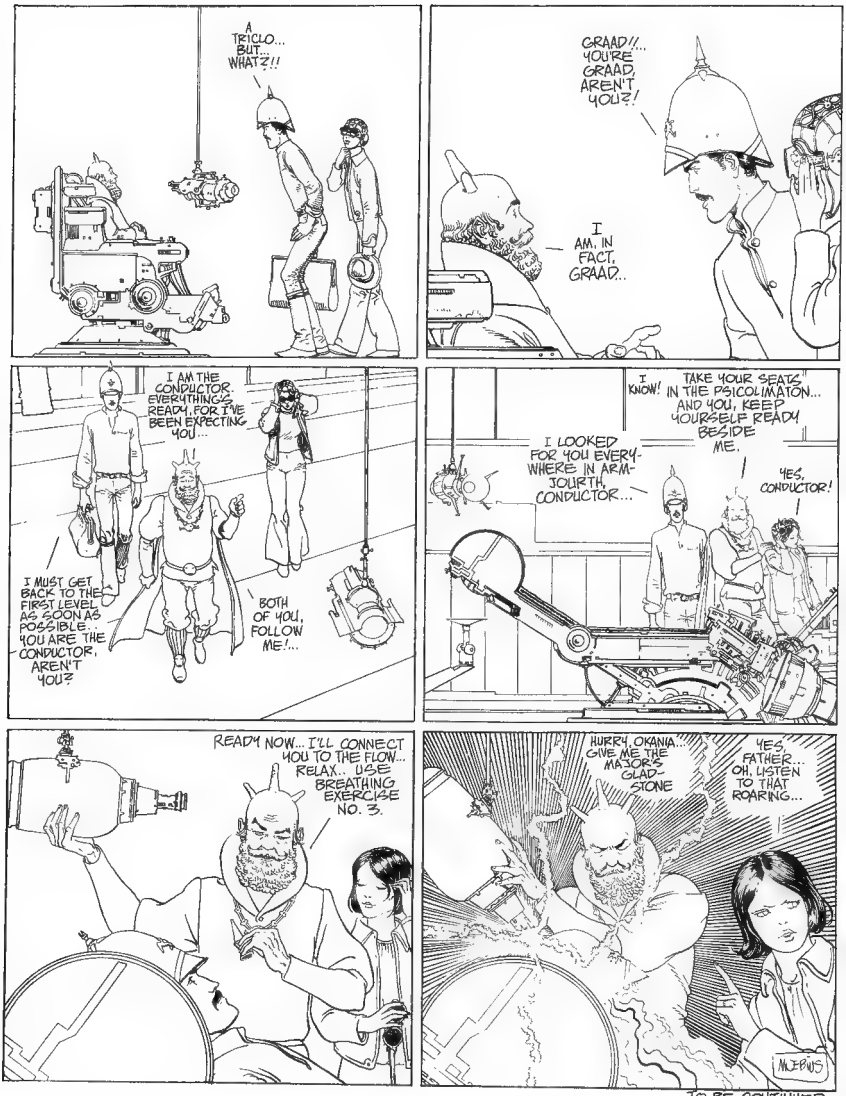

DRUKE
FOLLOWED BY HANS STORCH, SOLE SURVIVOR FROM THE ESCORT, THE DRUKE BEGINS THE LAST PHASE OF ITS LANDING. MEANWHILE...

MY CONTROLS!!!! BY THE THOUSAND GALAXIES!!! THEY SEEM TO BE STICKING... GETTING TIGHTER AND TIGHTER... AND THAT RENEGADE... IS HEADING RIGHT INTO THE JUNGLE!!!?


MORRIS HIMSELF VALIANTLY HEADS INTO THE JUNGLE...
HOLY BLAZING SPIT-FIRE! I'LL NEVER GET OUT OF THIS HELL ALIVE!
HEADING STRAIGHT FOR THE BASE, MORRIS SHOOTS OUT OF THE JUNGLE, HIS CONTROLS BLOCKED!
EJECT! EJECT!
VON TRICKTUS... YES, IT'S HIM! HE'S REACHED THE BASE!...
EVACUATE! CLOSE THE LANDING STRIP DOOR! THE ENEMY IS UPON US!
AND WITH A TERRIBLE CRASH, THE REBEL SLAMS INTO THE ROCKY TOWER...
DOCTOR, LOOK! SOMETHING JUST SHOT OUT OF THE WOODS!
WE'VE GOT TO GET TO THE ASTRODOME BEFORE THEY BAR OUR ROUTE!
THAT'S THE COSMONAUT WHO DESTROYED OUR ASTRO-PORT! DAMN HIM! HE MUST DIE!!


I'LL AIM MY GUN AT HIM, THEN I'LL HEAD FOR THE ROAD!!
HA! THEY'RE GETTING ME FROM ALL SIDES!... THE CARS... THEY'VE GOT TELESCOPIC CAPACITY!!!!
BY ALL THE PLANETS!! IT'S STORCH!!
AAAHHH.. THE RAVINE!
THE TWO CARS VEER DOWN INTO THE VOID, CARRYING DOCTOR VON RICKTUS AND HIS COMRADES TO THEIR TRAGIC DOOM!
THANK YOU, HANS, FOR YOUR TIMELY DEED! STORCH IS A GOOD SOLDIER IN A CRUNCH! IN THE END, HE ALWAYS COMES THROUGH!...
WILL CAPTAIN WHITE TAKE OVER THE ASTRODOME?!? YOU'LL FIND OUT WHEN YOU READ THE NEXT EPISODE IN HEAVY METAL!!


THE AIRTIGHT GARAGE OF JERRY CORNELIUS
by MOEBIUS
STOE MAJORDAK OKEDT ORKEO
PLEASE TURN ON THE LIGHTS, MAJOR...
STORY SO FAR: MAJOR GRUBERT IS HIDING OUT IN A DOWNTOWN HOTEL... HE'S JUST ABOUT TO ENTER MYSTERIOUS ROOM NO. 6.
COME IN! I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU...
MEANWHILE, ON BOARD THE TATER ZOOO...
HELLO! JASPER THE QUICKIE'G OF ARMJOURTH ARE JUST COMING INTO VIEW!...


A TRICLO... BUT... WHAT?!!
GRAAD!!... YOU'RE GRAAD, AREN'T YOU?!
I AM, IN FACT, GRAAD...
I AM THE CONDUCTOR. EVERYTHING'S READY, FOR I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU...
I MUST GET BACK TO THE FIRST LEVEL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. YOU ARE THE CONDUCTOR, AREN'T YOU?
BOTH OF YOU, FOLLOW ME!...
I KNOW!
TAKE YOUR SEATS IN THE PSICOLIMATON... AND YOU, KEEP YOURSELF READY BESIDE ME.
I LOOKED FOR YOU EVERYWHERE IN ARMJOURTH, CONDUCTOR...
YES, CONDUCTOR!
READY NOW... I'LL CONNECT YOU TO THE FLOW... RELAX... USE BREATHING EXERCISE NO. 3.
HURRY, OKANIA... GIVE ME THE MAJOR'S GLADSTONE
YES, FATHER... OH, LISTEN TO THAT ROARING...
MOEBIUS
TO BE CONTINUED...

EIGHT BELLES FOR STINGAREE...

tells 2 in its series for ~~~

©1979 GRAY MORROW

ROE ALYN, UNDERCOVER POLICEWOMAN, HAS TOO MANY ENEMIES. HER INVESTIGATIONS INTO POLITICAL GRAFT AND OFFICIAL CORRUPTION HAVE EARNED HER THE ENMITY OF THOSE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE LAW. HER TESTIMONY AT CURRENT INVESTIGATORY HEARINGS HAS CAUSED SENSATIONAL HEADLINES AND THREATENED SCANDALS OF STATEWIDE PROPORTIONS...

YOU'RE IN BIG TROUBLE!

CAPTAIN OF DETECTIVES

EXTRA! GUARDIAN LINE ADMINISTRATION SCANDAL

...ADVISED TO KEEP QUIET BY HER SUPERIORS BECAUSE SOME OF HER FINDINGS WILL JEOPARDIZE THE CAREERS OF VITAL PEOPLE IN HIGH PLACES, ROE BECOMES DISILLUSIONED...

ROE, YOU'RE A GOOD COP, BUT YOU CAN'T WIN 'EM ALL! IF YOU SUBMIT ALL YOUR EVIDENCE TO THE DAIN COMMISSION, YOU'LL CRACK THIS TOWN WIDE OPEN! HURT A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO CAN HURT BACK!

YOU WANT ME TO CLAM UP NOW? AFTER ALL I WENT THROUGH TO GET THOSE FACTS? LET THE BIG FISH GET AWAY?!

I CAN'T SILENCE YOU. I PERSONALLY DON'T CARE HOW MANY REPUTATIONS YOU SMASH. WHAT WORRIES ME IS THERE'LL BE SO MANY CONTRACTS OUT ON YOU THIS CITY'LL BECOME A SHOOTING GALLERY, AND SOME INNOCENT BYSTANDER'LL BE CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE!

THE D.A.'S ALREADY PLANNING TO PUT YOU IN PROTECTIVE CUSTODY.

NO! I CAN'T OPERATE THAT WAY! THERE'S TOO MANY GUYS IN THE ADMINISTRATION THE BOSSES'VE GOT THEIR HOOKS INTO. I'D BE SAFER IN THE STREETS. BESIDES, IF MY INFORMANTS SEE ME MUFFLED UP BY THE D.A., THEY'LL GET BOGY AND BUTTON UP.

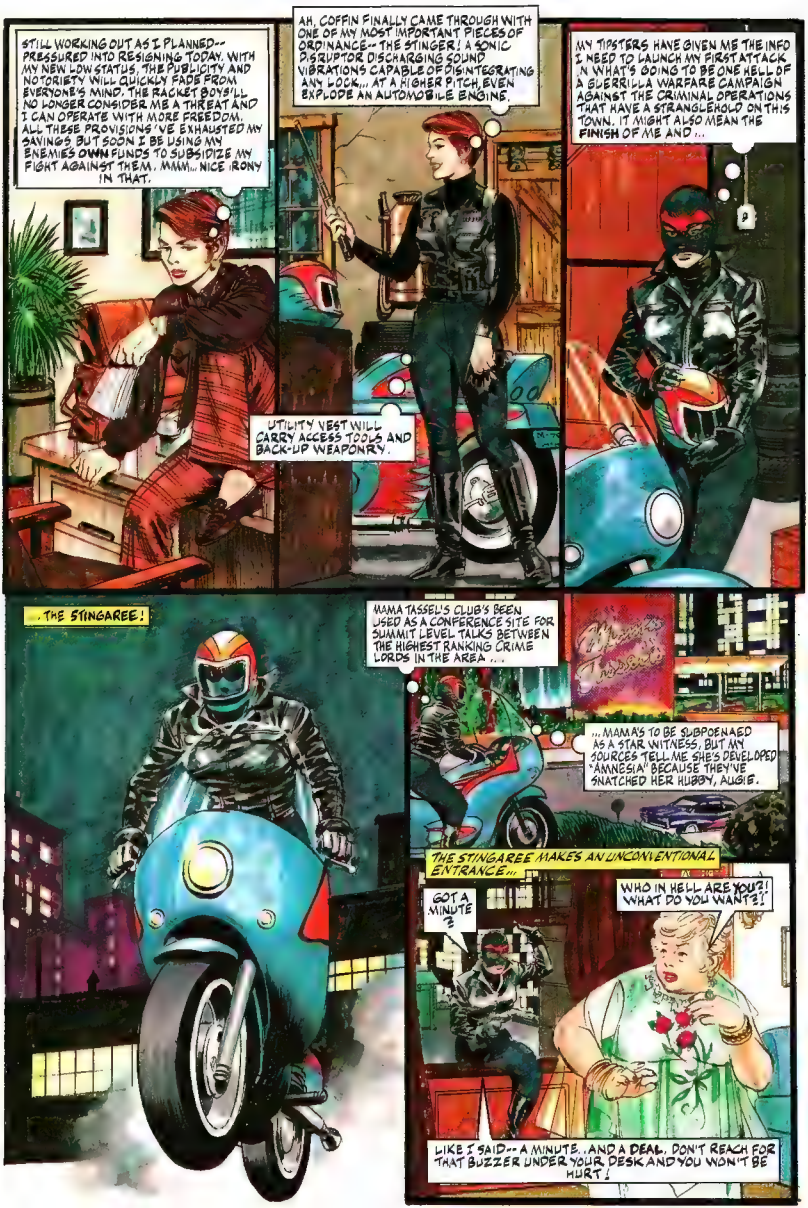
WHAT'RE YOU GOING TO DO?

TALK TO THE BEST DAMN COP IN THE COUNTRY--AND THE ONLY PERSON IN THE WORLD I CAN COMPLETELY TRUST!

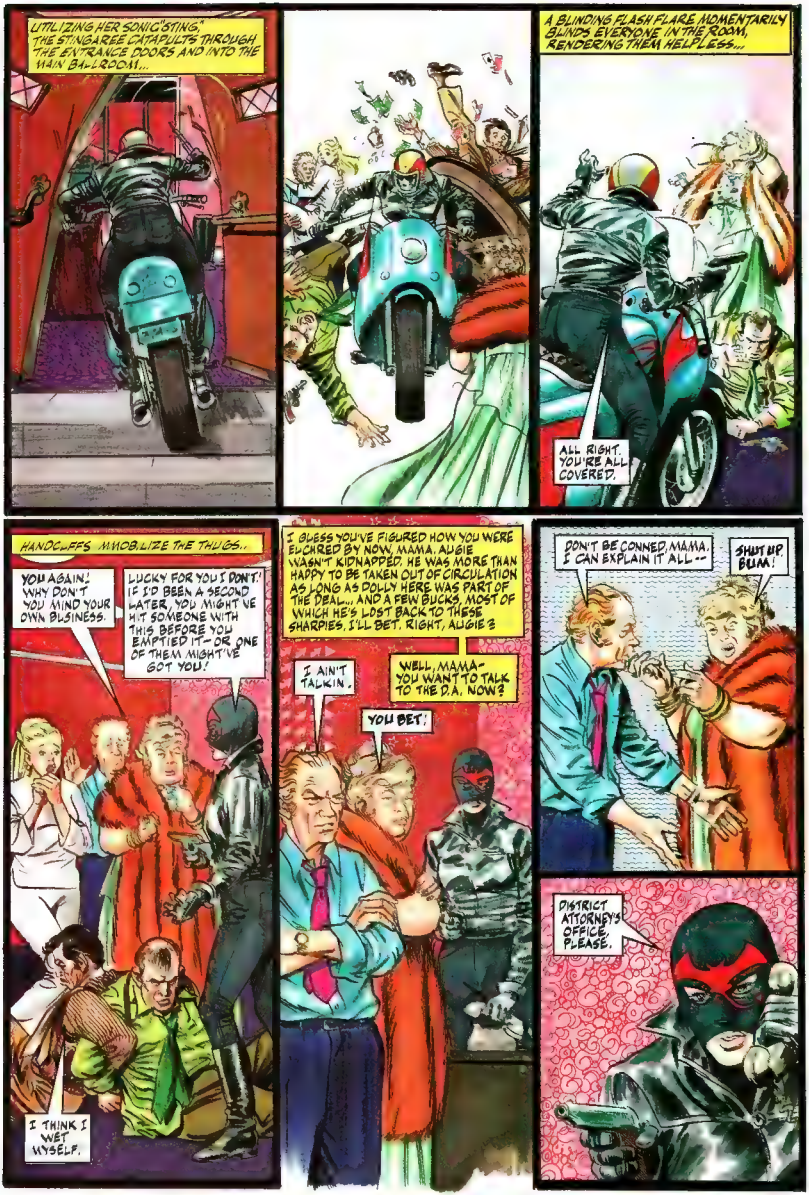
SOMETIME LATER, ON A FLIGHT SOUTH~~~
"ALYN MISSING." HMM... MAYBE I'M MISSING MY MARBLES TO RUN OUT LIKE THIS, BUT I'VE GOT TO TALK TO...
... UNCLE BOYD! I KNOW THIS COMES AS A SURPRISE, BUT-
NO. I'VE BEEN EXPECTIN' YOU. I'VE BEEN FOLLOWING THE T.V. AND NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS. COME ON IN AND GIVE ME YOUR VERSION.
HOURS LATER...
SO THAT'S THE STORY. IF I TELL ALL, I RAISE SUCH A CONTROVERSY THAT I'LL BE BUSTED BACK TO A METER MAID, IF I'M LUCKY. OR A MARK FOR A GAGGLE OF HIT MEN, IF I'M LESS FORTUNATE.
WHY NOT JUST QUIT?
NO. I JUST CAN'T WALK AWAY FROM THIS THING!
YOU WERE THE BEST DAMN LAWMAN THIS COUNTY EVER HAD. YOU HAD TO FACE DOWN A HUNDRED GUNS IN YOUR TIME. THREATS OF BLACKMAIL, RETALIATION, AND PUBLIC DISGRACE. FRAME-UPS AND SELL-OUTS BY THE VERY PEOPLE YOU WERE PAID TO PROTECT. AND EVERY OTHER DIRTY STAB IN THE BACK AN INCORRUPTABLE COP HAS TO DEAL WITH-- BUT YOU NEVER QUIT.
FIGURED YOU'D SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT. WELL... I'VE GOT NO EASY ANSWERS, HOWEVER, I DO HAVE A SUGGESTION YOU JUST MIGHT CONSIDER...
FROM UNDER THE VELVET LINING OF AN OLD PISTOL CASE, ROE'S UNCLE PULLS FORTH A CAREFULLY FOLDED BLACK CLOTH...
AND THAT IS?
THIS, ROE, IS THE...
... MASK OF THE STINGAREE!!

UNCLE BOYD! YOU'RE KIDDING! YOU WERE THE STINGAREE!?
ROB, THERE'S A CRIMEFIGHTING TRADITION, IN THIS FAMILY, WITH OR WITHOUT OFFICIAL SANCTION, THAT GOES BACK A HUNDRED YEARS...
THIS MASK WAS FIRST WORN BY ONE OF YOUR ANCESTORS BACK IN THE 1600S TO CONCEAL HIS IDENTITY WHILE HE DEALT WITH SOME COURT INTRIGUE IN A SMALL EUROPEAN MONARCHY...
...AND LATER ON BY HIS NIECE ON THE BARBARY COAST TO BREAK UP A SLAVE RING... AND SO ON DOWN THE LINE...
... UNTIL I WORE IT TO CLEAN UP THE TROUBLES IN THIS COMMUNITY WAY BACK IN '39...
I REMEMBER THE NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS AUNT EDY SHOWED ME. A MASKED VIGILANTE LIKE SOMETHING FROM AN OLD MOVIE SERIAL. I CAN'T BE-LIEVE IT WAS ACTUALLY YOU, MY UNCLE!

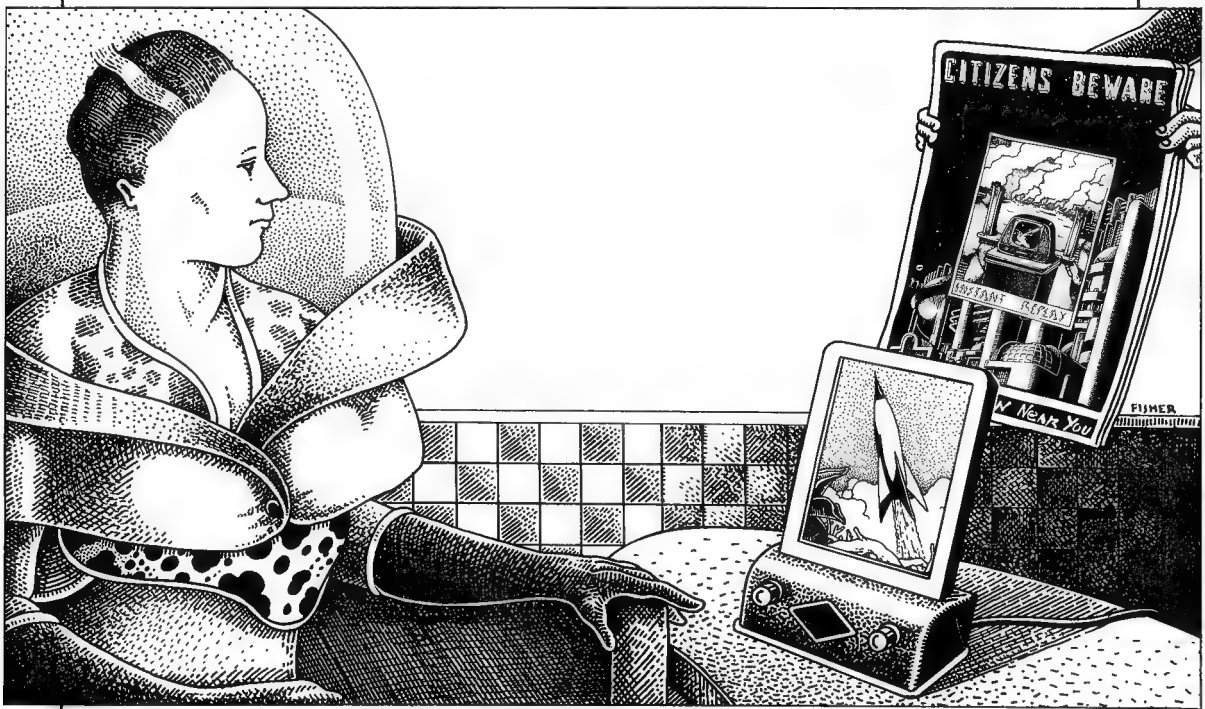
IT IS A THOUGHTFUL ROE ALYN WHO WINDS HER WAY BACK TO THE SCENE OF HER TROUBLES...
MAYBE IT WAS OKAY FOR UNCLE BOYD AND MY ANCESTORS TO WORK BEHIND A MASK FIGHTING CRIME IN THOSE DAYS, BUT YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH THAT KIND OF VIGILANTE JUSTICE TODAY... OR CAN YOU ?
AS HE SAID, WHY NOT? IF THE LAW IS HAMSTRUNG THEN IT'S THE DUTY OF THE PRIVATE CITIZEN TO STEP IN. MAYBE HE'S RIGHT. MAYBE I COULD. IT WOULD BE TRICKY... I'D NEED SOME HELP... SOME OF MY INFORMANTS... CONTACTS, AND SOME SPECIAL TOOLS.
ROE'S FIRST STEP IS TO VISIT COFFIN, ARMORER AND ELECTRONICS EXPERT, WHOSE CUSTOMERS ORDERS FOR SPECIAL EQUIPMENT MIGHT BE ANYTHING FROM BUGGING DEVICES TO TIME BOMBS.
I DON'T WANT TO KNOW WHAT THESE ARE FOR, OF COURSE! YOU SAVED MY SKIN ONCE AND I'LL NEVER FORGET IT. YOUR "TOOLS" PRESENT ME WITH AN INTERESTING CHALLENGE, SERIOUS CRAFTSMAN THAT I AM, I'LL SEE THAT YOU GET THE BEST!
THANKS COFFIN
FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, ROE IS KEPT BUSY BETWEEN THE HEARINGS AND SECRETLY GATHERING A STRANGE ARRAY OF ARTICLES AND INFORMATION TO BE USED IN HER ONE WOMAN WAR ON CRIME.
LET'S SEE. THE CYCLE WILL GIVE ME GREATER MOBILITY THAN ANY CAR... A SET OF ACCESS TOOLS THAT COULD OPEN FT. KNOX... MAPS AND GUIDES TO SUBWAYS, SEWERS, TUNNELS AND CONDUITS FOR POWER AND MAINTENANCE.
NEVER REALIZED THERE WERE SO MANY SUBLEVELS TO A MODERN METROPOLIS. IT'S LIKE AN ICEBERG--MORE BELOW THE SURFACE THAN ABOVE. IF NEED BE, I CAN REACH ANY PART OF THE CITY-- UNDERGROUND.
JUST AS I EXPECTED. MY TRIP SOUTH GAVE THE MOB TIME TO BUY OFF OR TERRORIZE INTO SILENCE MY MAIN WITNESSES. MY EVIDENCE WITHOUT THEIR TESTIMONY WILL PUT SOME SMALL FRY IN THE SLAMMER, BUT THE BIG SHOTS WILL GO FREE. THEIR INFLUENCE WITH THE MEDIA AND THE PERSUASIVE TALENTS OF THEIR DEFENSE COUNSEL WILL MAKE ME LOOK LIKE SOME SORT OF PUBLICITY-SEEKING FREAK USING HER BADGE TO PERSECUTE "LAW-ABIDING CITIZENS"--OR A MAVERICK, A ROGUE COP! GOOD, THEY'RE PLAYING RIGHT INTO MY HANDS!
AS SOON AS I LEAVE THE FORCE, THIS OFFICE BECOMES MY "COVER"... DISCREDITED COP TURNS PRIVATE EYE... WITH A RIVERFRONT LOCALE... HANDY TO THE CITY'S NETWORK OF WATERWAYS AS WELL AS MY UNDERGROUND SYSTEM.

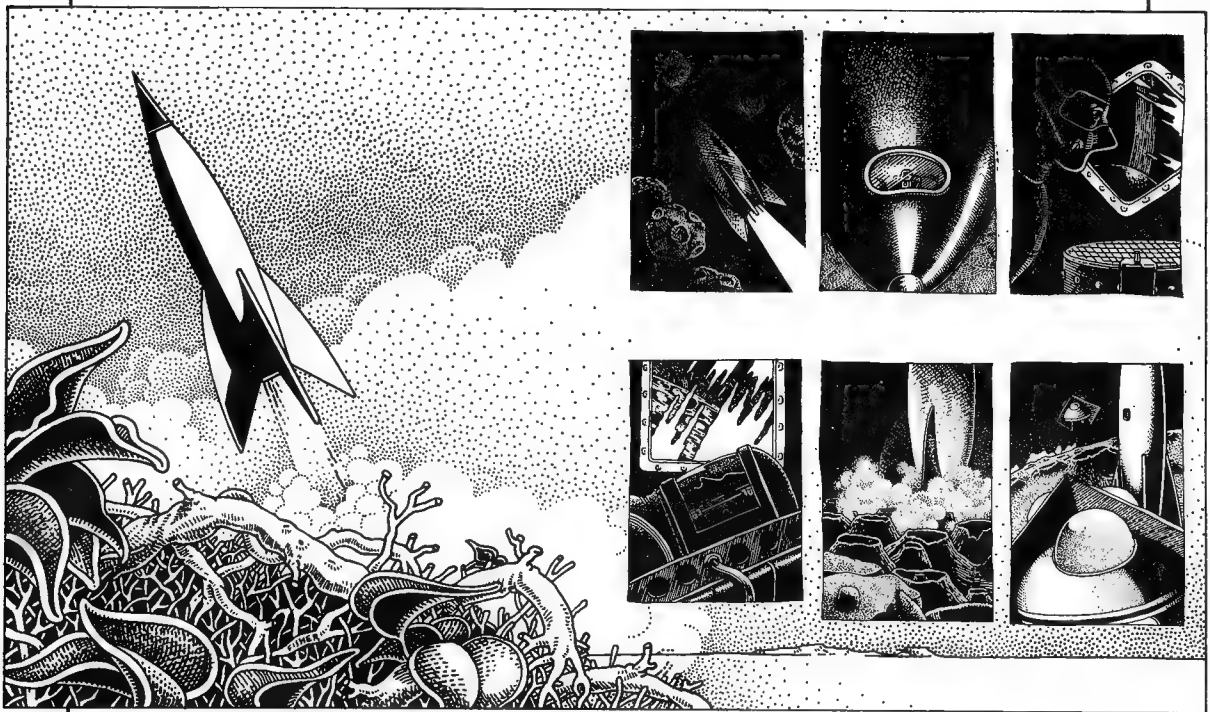

STILL WORKING OUT AS I PLANNED-- PRESSURED INTO RESIGNING TODAY. WITH MY NEW LOW STATUS, THE PUBLICITY AND NOTORIETY WILL QUICKLY FADE FROM EVERYONE'S MIND. THE RACKET BOYS'LL NO LONGER CONSIDER ME A THREAT AND I CAN OPERATE WITH MORE FREEDOM. ALL THESE PROVISIONS I'VE EXHAUSTED MY SAVINGS, BUT SOON I BE USING MY ENEMIES OWN FUNDS TO SUBSIDIZE MY FIGHT AGAINST THEM. MMM... NICE IRONY IN THAT.
AH, COFFIN FINALLY CAME THROUGH WITH ONE OF MY MOST IMPORTANT PIECES OF ORDINANCE-- THE STINGER! A SONIC DISRUPTOR DISCHARGING SOUND VIBRATIONS CAPABLE OF DISINTEGRATING ANY LOCK... AT A HIGHER PITCH, EVEN EXPLODE AN AUTOMOBILE ENGINE.
UTILITY VEST WILL CARRY ACCESS TOOLS AND BACK-UP WEAPONRY.
MY TIPSTERS HAVE GIVEN ME THE INFO I NEED TO LAUNCH MY FIRST ATTACK IN WHAT'S GOING TO BE ONE HELL OF A GUERRILLA WARFARE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE CRIMINAL OPERATIONS THAT HAVE A STRANGLEHOLD ON THIS TOWN. IT MIGHT ALSO MEAN THE FINISH OF ME AND...
...THE STINGAREE!
MAMA TASSEL'S CLUB'S BEEN USED AS A CONFERENCE SITE FOR SUMMIT LEVEL TALKS BETWEEN THE HIGHEST RANKING CRIME LORDS IN THE AREA...
...MAMA'S TO BE SUBPOENAED AS A STAR WITNESS, BUT MY SOURCES TELL ME SHE'S DEVELOPED "AMNESIA" BECAUSE THEY'VE SNATCHED HER HUBBY, ALGIE.
THE STINGAREE MAKES AN UNCONVENTIONAL ENTRANCE...
GOT A MINUTE?
WHO IN HELL ARE YOU?! WHAT DO YOU WANT?!
LIKE I SAID-- A MINUTE...AND A DEAL. DON'T REACH FOR THAT BUZZER UNDER YOUR DESK AND YOU WON'T BE HURT.

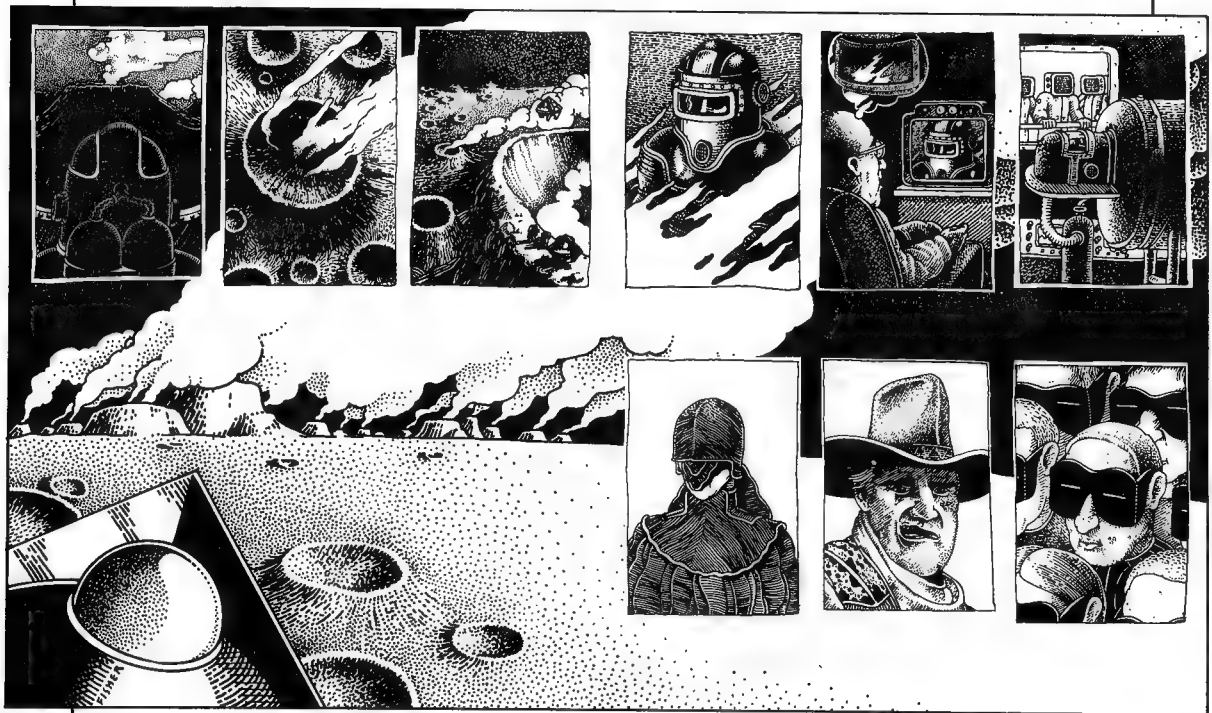
I DON'T MAKE DEALS WITH CREEPS WEARING MASKS!
YOU SHOULDN'T INSULT A GAL WHO'S GOING TO DO YOU A FAVOR. YOU WERE READY TO SPILL YOUR GUTS TO THE PAIN COMMISSION UNTIL LAST WEEK WHEN AUGIE WAS SNATCHED AND YOU LOST YOUR MEMORY. I'M GOING TO RETURN HIM TO YOU--IF YOU GET IT BACK!
YOU STAY OUT OF IT, WHOEVER YOU ARE! YOU GO NEAR HIM AND THEY'LL KILL HIM!
HE'S NOT MUCH, I ADMIT--BUT HE'S MY MAN!
I'LL DELIVER YOUR MAN TO YOU IN AN HOUR--ALIVE AND WHOLE... IF YOU'LL LET THE D.A. PUT YOU BOTH UNDER PROTECTIVE CUSTODY UNTIL YOU CAN TELL WHAT YOU BOTH KNOW.
NO WAY! I WAS READY TO BLAB BEFORE, BUT NOT NOW. IF AUGIE'S KILLED BECAUSE OF YOUR INTERFERENCE, I'LL SEE YOU IN HELL! NOW JUST BUTT OUT, Y'HEAR!?
OKAY, SWEETIE. IF YOU WON'T COOPERATE, MAYBE AUGIE WILL! TOODLES!
HERE'S THE OLD ROADHOUSE WHERE AUGIE'S BEING HELD. WAIT. I KNOW I WASN'T FOLLOWED BUT THERE'S MAMA TASSEL'S CAR. THAT MEANS SHE KNEW AUGIE WAS HERE, TOO! I'D BETTER GET IN THERE--FAST!
CLOSED FOR RENOVATIONS! WATCH FOR OUR RE-OPENING
COME ON, AUGIE, BABY, YOU BIN PLAYIN' CARDS ALL NIGHT. I'M LONESOME. PAY ME SOME 'TENSHUN.
OKAY, DOLLY, BABY, I'M NOT DOIN' MUCH GOOD HERE, ANYHOW. FIX ME 'NOTHER DRINK 'N' GIMME KISS.
YOU BASTARD! AND I CAME TO BEG THEM TO GIVE YOU BACK TO ME SO'S WE COULD SKIP TOWN 'CAUSE SOME MASKED SNOOP'S STIRRIN' THINGS UP, AND I FIND YOU PLAYIN' FOOTSIE WITH A FLOOZIE!
NOW, MAMA, TAKE IT EASY, I--
KRAK
KRAK
KRAK!

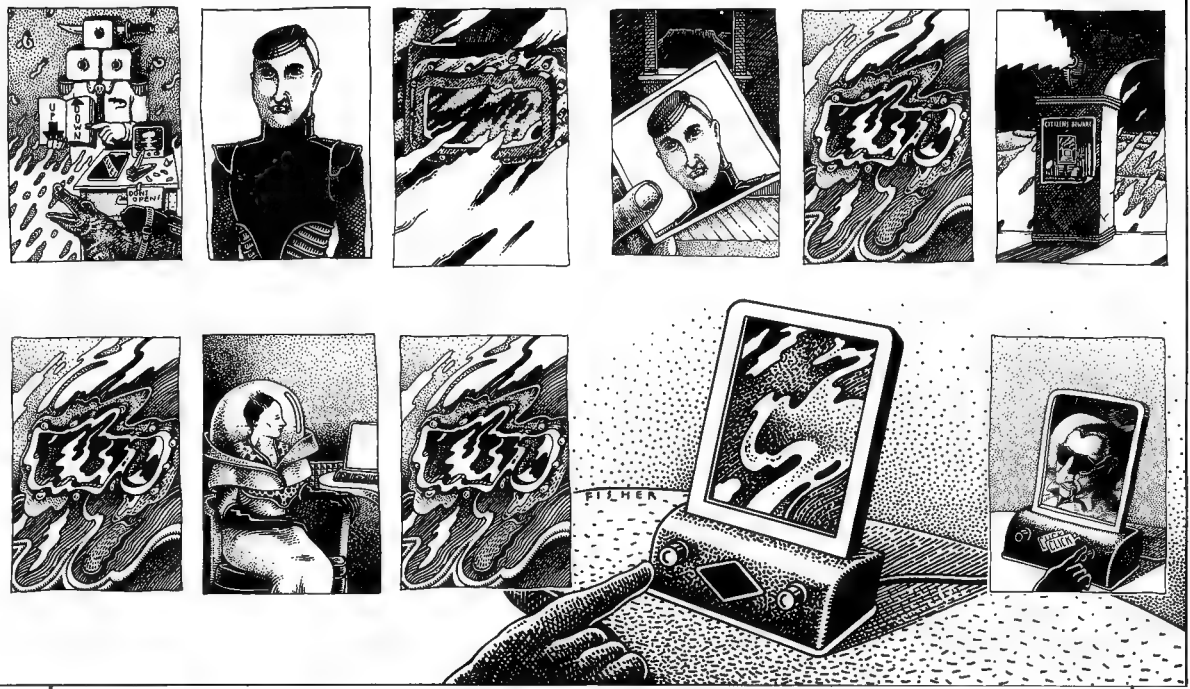

UTILIZING HER SONIC "STING," THE STINGAREE CATAPULTS THROUGH THE ENTRANCE DOORS AND INTO THE MAIN BALLROOM!...
A BLINDING FLASH FLARE MOMENTARILY BLINDS EVERYONE IN THE ROOM, RENDERING THEM HELPLESS...
ALL RIGHT. YOU'RE ALL COVERED.
HANDCUFFS IMMOBILIZE THE THUGS..
YOU AGAIN! WHY DON'T YOU MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS.
LUCKY FOR YOU I DON'T! IF I'D BEEN A SECOND LATER, YOU MIGHT'VE HIT SOMEONE WITH THIS BEFORE YOU EMPTIED IT-- OR ONE OF THEM MIGHT'VE GOT YOU!
I THINK I WET MYSELF.
I GUESS YOU'VE FIGURED HOW YOU WERE ELCHED BY NOW, MAMA. AUGIE WASN'T KIDNAPPED. HE WAS MORE THAN HAPPY TO BE TAKEN OUT OF CIRCULATION AS LONG AS DOLLY HERE WAS PART OF THE DEAL... AND A FEW BUCKS, MOST OF WHICH HE'S LOST BACK TO THESE SHARPIES, I'LL BET. RIGHT, AUGIE?
I AIN'T TALKIN.
WELL, MAMA- YOU WANT TO TALK TO THE D.A. NOW?
YOU BET!
DON'T BE CONNED, MAMA. I CAN EXPLAIN IT ALL--
SHUT UP BUM!
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, PLEASE.

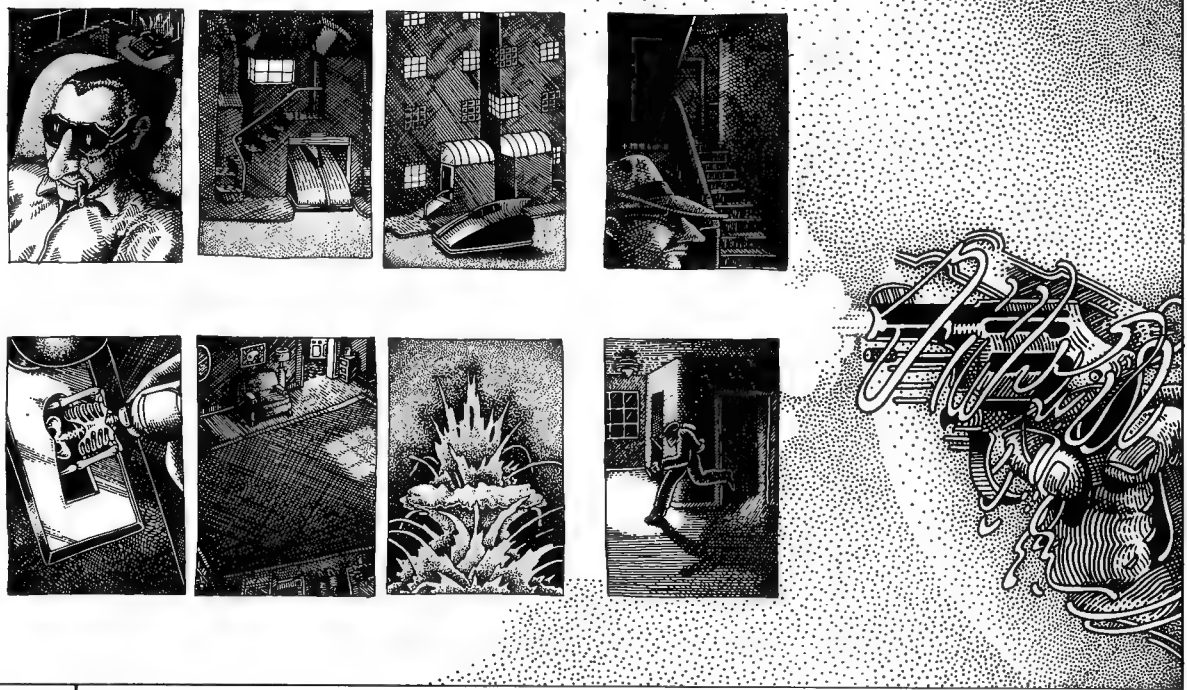
WE RECEIVED AN ANONYMOUS TIP THAT YOU WERE READY TO COOPERATE AND NEEDED MY OFFICE'S PROTECTION--THAT STRAIGHT?
STRAIGHT AS MISS ANONYMOUS HERSELF.
TURNS OUT MAMA TASSEL HAD ACTUAL TAPE RECORDINGS OF THOSE CONFERENCES SHE INTENDED TO SWAP WITH THE MOB FOR AUGIE'S SAFE RETURN. NOW THE D.A.'S REALLY GOT SOMETHING TO WORK WITH.
SOUNDS LIKE YOU'VE DEALT CRIME IN THIS TOWN A BODY BLOW, DONA QUIXOTE.
LATER...
IT ALL WORKED OUT! I DON'T BELIEVE IT! UNCLE BOYD, YOU WERE RIGHT! NOW, WHEN I STOP SHAKING SUFFICIENTLY TO HOLD KNIFE AND FORK, I'M TAKING COFFIN OUT FOR DINNER AND DRINKS. HE'S EARNED IT--AND SO HAVE I!
NO. JUST A STING--BUT IT'S A START. NOW SHALL WE CELEBRATE?
WAITER, TWO STINGERS, PLEASE!
THE STINGAREE HAD BEGUN A CAREER THAT NIGHT THAT WAS TO SPAN SEVERAL YEARS--ONE THAT, WHILE IT NEVER ERADICATED CRIME IN HER CITY, SERIOUSLY HAMPERED ITS ACTIVITIES--UNTIL ONE NIGHT, IN A DARK ALLEY, THE STINGAREE/ROE ALYN MET A FATEFUL END--
--OR DID SHE...?

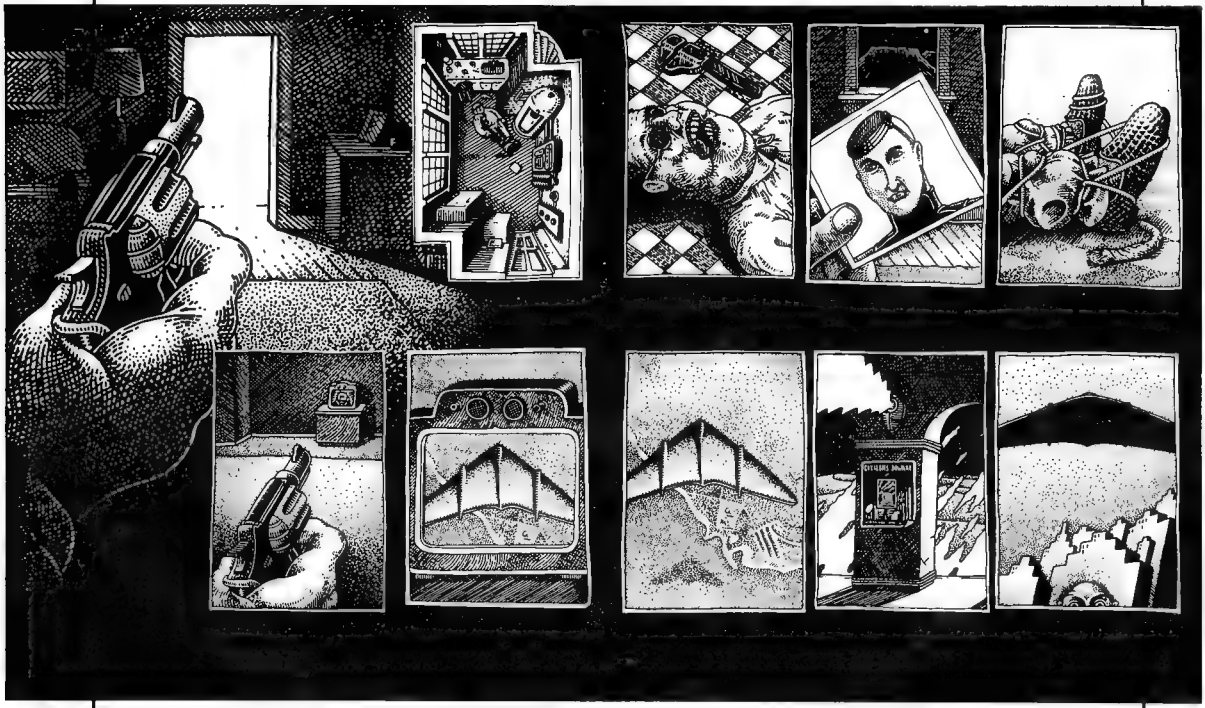

CITIZENS BEWARE
INSTANT REPLAY
FUMER

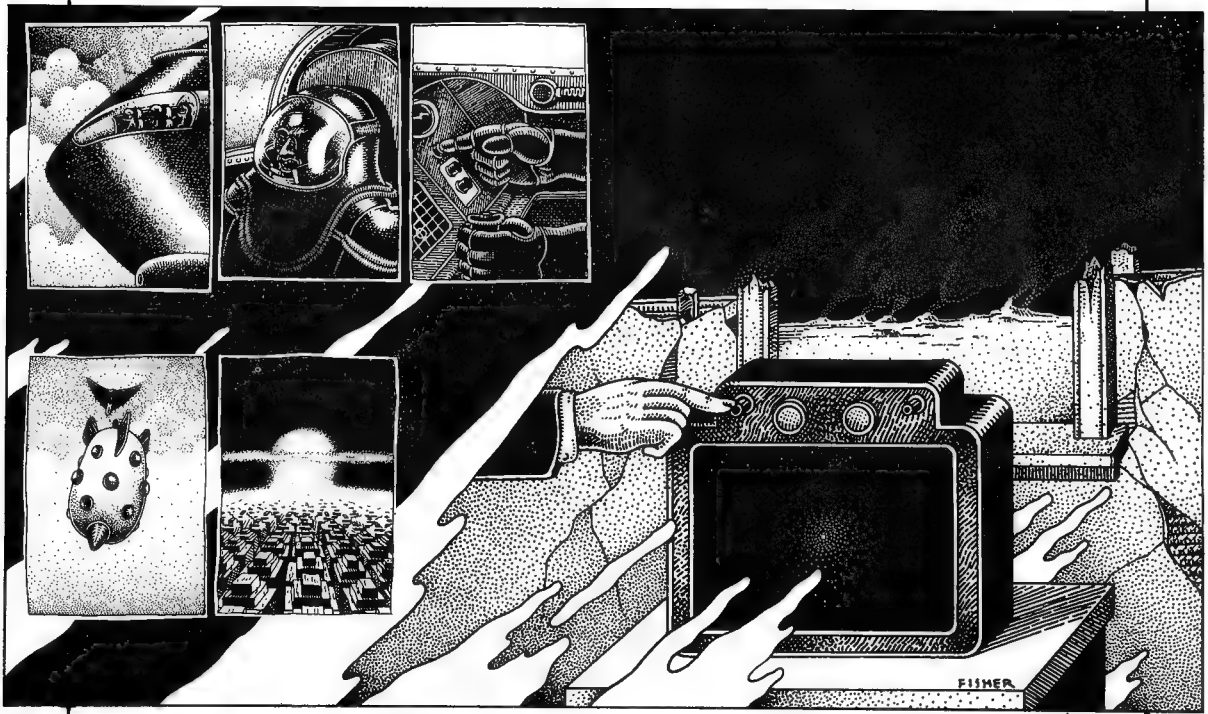


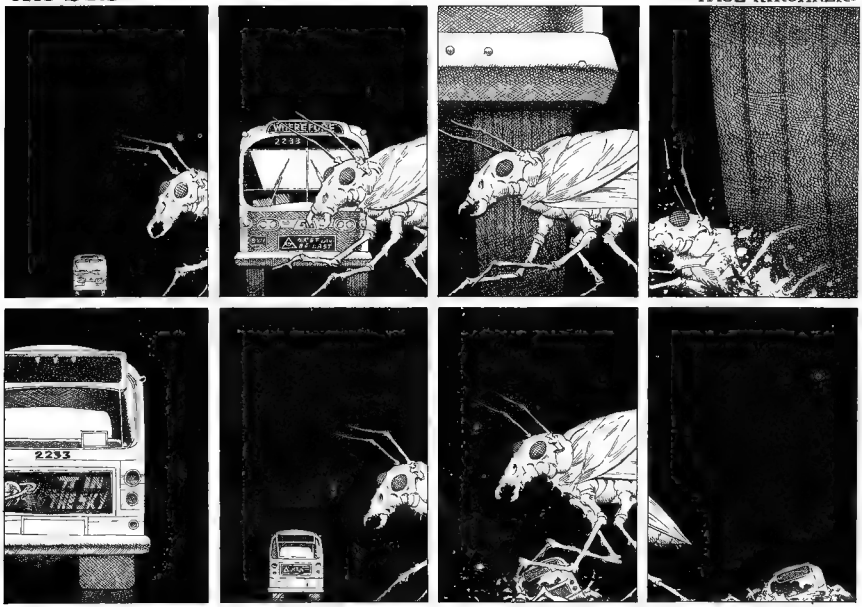



DON'T OPEN!
CITIZEN BINARY
FISHER






FISHER



Chain Mail

...If the "natives" can produce such exalted fantasies, then who needs the French, anyway?

Martin W Goeller
San Diego, California

Merci. –The Eds.

Dear Sirs:

This is just a short letter to say how disappointed I am becoming with the quality of *Heavy Metal*. I have noticed this from my friends, and the letters being printed in your letters page. The only good artist you still have is Macedo. Corben's "Sindbad" has been very confusing and disjointed of late. What I would like to see is "Elric: The Return to Melnibone," which was written by Michael Moorcock and illustrated by Druillet. I think your readers would enjoy this work as originally it was released (in English, anyway) in a limited edition in 1973 and is now long out of print. At any rate, I wish you the best in 1979.

Douglas Orlowski
Ontario, Canada

Doug:

Who listens to your friends... and Lord knows, we pay no attention to our Chain Mail. But funny you should mention "Elric"—we are running this story in our September issue... at newsstands everywhere.—The Eds.

Sirs:

More material by Moebius, Bilal, Caza, and Macedo, please. Junk like "1996" is wearing pretty thin.

N. Chaput

Folks:

You've got quite a magazine on your hands. Keep it up! I would like to commend your publication of Moebius, Bilal, and "Alien." I will be in much joy if you launch more "Alien," and especially more Moebius.

One very odd thing plagues my mind. Way back in your July 1978 issue, an incredible Bihannic/Druillet story appeared, "The Story of the Acrylic Magus and His Vibratory Perturbations." It was definitely one of the best-drawn bits you have had in your mag. I got all excited when I read at the bottom, "To be continued..." *It wasn't!* Now, is this some sort of trick? I won't rest until I find out.

M.M.
Denton, Texas

Dear M.M.:

We don't know! It's up to the Frogs—your guess is as good as ours!—The Eds.

Dear *Heavy Metal*:

Generally, I think you mag is sexist slop with the occasional flashes of a slick pen-handler like Moebius. However, I have spent many minutes looking over and admiring Montellier's "1996." ...In the store where I pose as a sales clerk, I'm forced to rip out and off those last few pages of Montellier. Therefore, it would be appreciated if you would issue a compiled edition of "1996."

Rich Kaplan
Toronto, Canada

Hey, Rich!

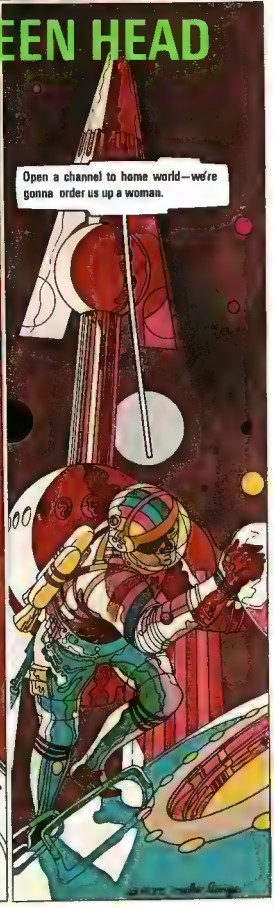
Get yourself a subscription and quit ripping up those Heavy Metal*s! We're real glad you like "1996" (and are ignoring the crack about sexist slop), but have no plans to run it as a book (good idea, though). –The Eds.*

RECEIVING: CLASSIFICATION FIVE DANGER AVOIDED, ALAN, BUT BY A HAIR'S BREADTH. LCD METER TWO AND THREE ARE UP EIGHT POINTS.
I know, I know . . . it's just . . . I've been distracted the past few days.
©1970 mike kunga

. . . REARS ITS UGLY GREEN HEAD

By Michael Hinge and Neal Adams

DISTRACTION IS A DEADLY DANGER TO A COLONIZER-CLASS ENGINEER. THIS CITY WILL NOT BE COMPLETED WITHOUT YOUR FULL ATTENTION.
It's a problem with a solution, Point 01.
©1971 mike kunga

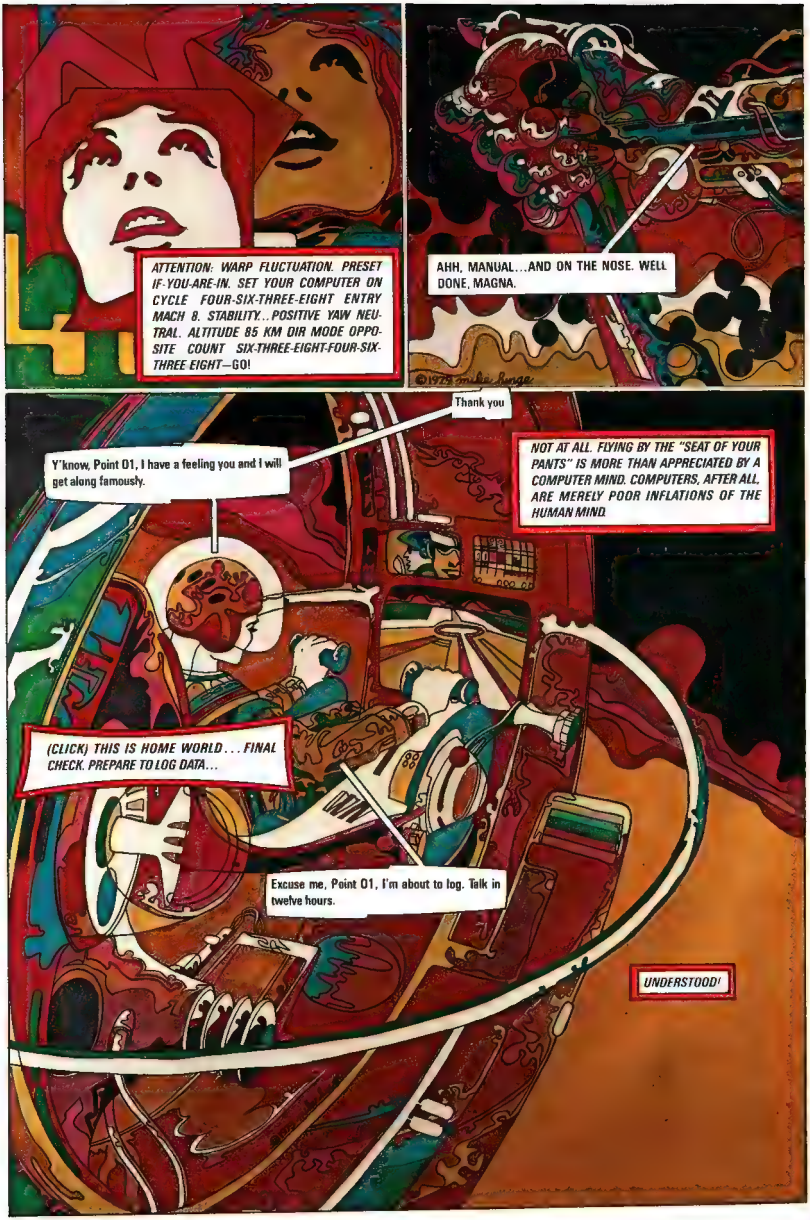


I know this sounds crazy to a rob...but...
NOT AT ALL...
...But with humans it's a basic need. At least it is now for me! Being without has impaired my function.
I think about them. I have a need to touch one, be with one. If you...
THERE IS NO NEED TO EXPLAIN FURTHER. I HAVE BEEN PROGRAMMED, AS YOU KNOW, TO UNDERSTAND THIS PHENOMENON, AND TOOK IT UPON MYSELF TO PLACE AN ORDER TWO DAYS AGO. ONE FEMALE HUMAN, A-1 CONDITION, TO BE CONFIRMED TODAY.
The home world channel is open.
©1979 mike hunga

Is this Alan Light, CLICK, am I speaking to Alan Light? Alan Light? Colonizer A2?
You got it, home worlder. Point 01's told me you have my request on back-order.
Wrong. We're on the firing line. Just waiting for your personnel confirmation. As far as corporate is concerned, you one-man city builders are A-1 priority. You can have anything your little ol' heart desires. Personally, I don't know how you guys out there stand it. Hold on for legal commitment confirmation.... Knowing the dangers of human companionship and commitment to production schedules, do you still wish to confirm this order for one female human?
YES
Did you get that, Clinger?!
I got it, loner... your order's on its way

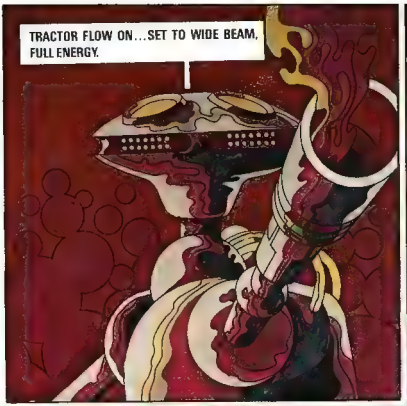
Good. Now I can settle down to work. Why didn't I think of this before? Whoever she is, she'll be great. And, goddamnit, my work'll improve. I'll finish *ahead* of schedule.
Interlock—pulse—one—pulse—two—pulse—three—warp drive. Subspace communication channel narrowed down to point one three oh five. Do you copy, Point 01? This is Magna.
I COPY, MAGNA, YOUR BEAM IS NARROW AND TRUE. WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR ARRIVAL WITH ANTICIPATION AND JOY.
No more than I look forward to arriving, Point 01. Home world and its sticky contrivances drive me to distraction. I can feel home world and its myriad manifestations claw at me to bring me back. Yes, I come to you with joy.

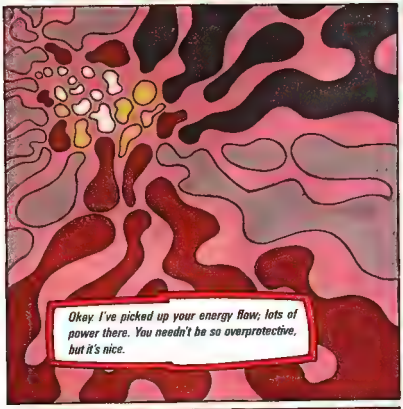
Ah, free space! I feel as though I can breathe for the first time.
Left to my own devices, I would soar the space lanes forever . . drinking up the universe through every pore in my body.
Oh, here it comes, the furthest point. I've never been cleared to go beyond it. No, colonizer, I'll not disappoint you, I'd sell my soul for this opportunity . . of course, that's exactly what I did.
©1975 mike kupp


ATTENTION: WARP FLUCTUATION. PRESET IF-YOU-ARE-IN. SET YOUR COMPUTER ON CYCLE FOUR-SIX-THREE-EIGHT ENTRY MACH 8. STABILITY...POSITIVE YAW NEUTRAL. ALTITUDE 85 KM DIR MODE OPPOSITE COUNT SIX-THREE-EIGHT-FOUR-SIX-THREE EIGHT—GO!
AHH, MANUAL...AND ON THE NOSE. WELL DONE, MAGNA.
©1978 Mike Ploog
Thank you
Y'know, Point 01, I have a feeling you and I will get along famously.
NOT AT ALL. FLYING BY THE "SEAT OF YOUR PANTS" IS MORE THAN APPRECIATED BY A COMPUTER MIND. COMPUTERS, AFTER ALL, ARE MERELY POOR INFLATIONS OF THE HUMAN MIND.
(CLICK) THIS IS HOME WORLD . . . FINAL CHECK. PREPARE TO LOG DATA...
Excuse me, Point 01, I'm about to log. Talk in twelve hours.
UNDERSTOOD!

GOOD NEWS, ALAN. SIXTEEN HOURS TO T.O. AND IF YOU DON'T MIND MY SAYING SO, FROM EVERY INDICATION SHE'S A PERFECT CHOICE, ESPECIALLY FOR *YOUR SPECIFIC* NEEDS.
Oh??
YES. SHE IS NOT ONLY A-1 IN THE FIFTEEN CRITICAL... CATEGORIES, BUT SHE'S ALSO RATED A-1 IN PLANET COLONY BUILDING.
Hmmmm...
THINK OF IT. SHE'LL NOT ONLY BE ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR BASIC—UH—CORPORAL NEEDS, BUT IN HER SPARE TIME, SHE CAN HELP YOU PLANET BUILD. AND WITH HER RATING, YOU'RE LIABLE TO FINISH AHEAD OF SCHEDULE.
NO CRITICISM INTENDED, ALAN, BUT YOU ARE, AFTER ALL AN A-2. AND THE HELP OF ANY A-1 ALBEIT A FEMALE A-1... WELL... IT'S A PERFECT MATCH...
©1979 mike Ringo
..DON'T YOU AGREE?
Perfect.

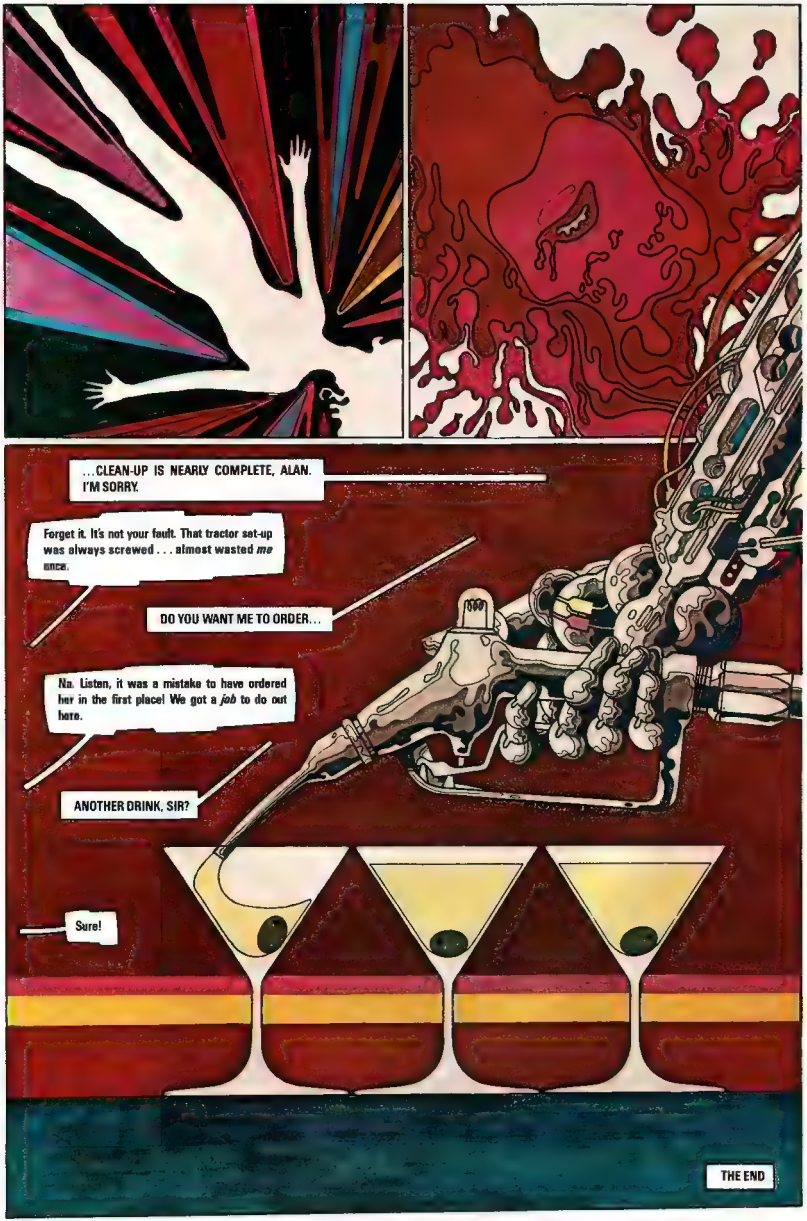
Point 01, is your channel clear?
CLEAR AND READING, MAGNA. HOW'S YOUR SPATIAL RELATIONSHIP?
Is this a personal or professional question, Point 01?
MERELY A POTENTIAL STATEMENT OF INTENT, MAGNA.
Ha-ha-ha-ha. Touché. Ready to copy?
READY
©1975 mike kaluta
A.O.D. 93. Deceleration, within normal limits. Increase A.D. 1 to 15 percent. Visual is 100 percent. You are looking beautiful, Point 01.
Cutting power. Please give descent approach and touchdown coordinates.
TRACK TJ3:75, AT TWO MINUTES, AT REVERSE MAX THRUST TYPICAL ALPHA 30 PERCENT CORRECT TO THIRTY-THREE DEGREES. WE HAVE A PROBLEM WITH OUR INCOMPLETE PORT BASIN, SO SET YOUR ALIGNMENT TO DIP TO TWO MILES TO DROP YOU, AND THEN HAVE YOUR VEHICLE SKIP INTO ORBIT WE'LL CATCH YOU IN OUR TRACTOR BEAM.
Copy! Ejection system activated.
Okay...maneuvers calculated. I'll drop at mark five, Point 01! Keep the kettle perkin'!
mike kaluta

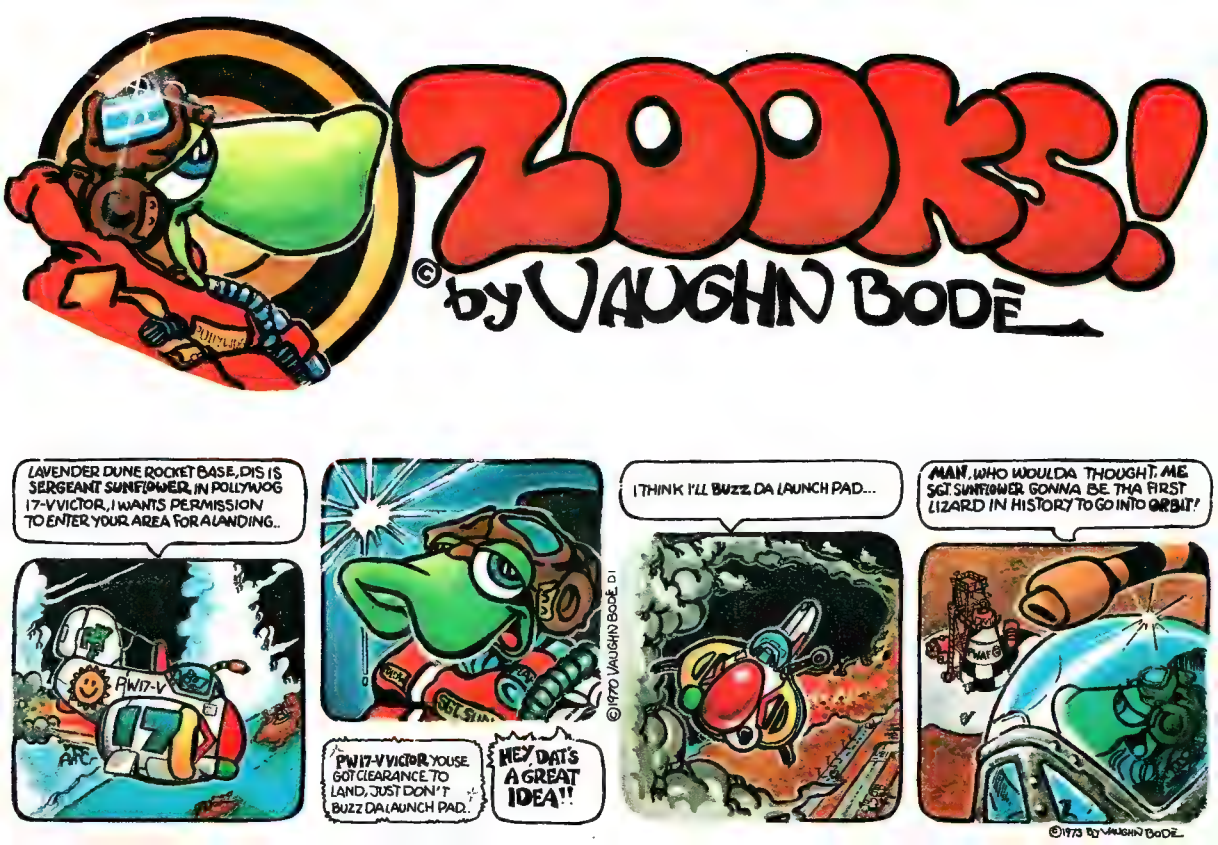

TRACTOR FLOW ON...SET TO WIDE BEAM, FULL ENERGY.

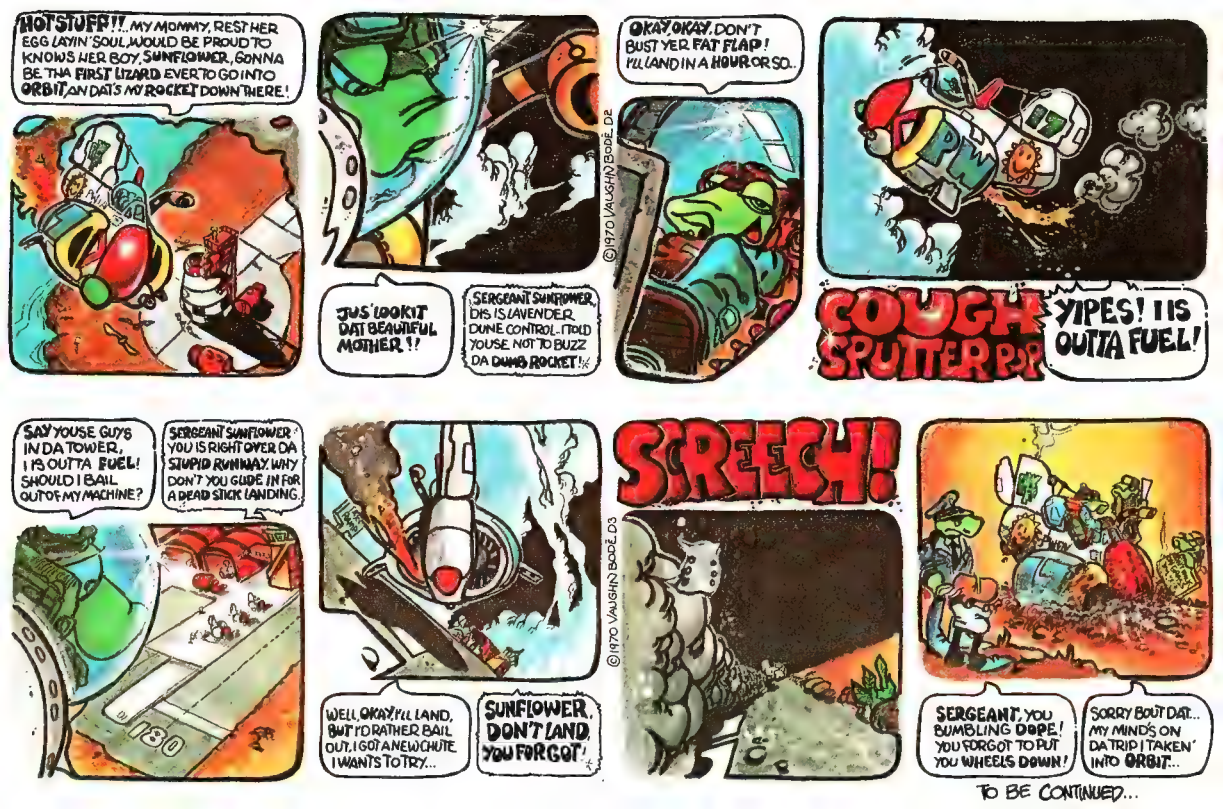

Okay. I've picked up your energy flow; lots of power there. You needn't be so overprotective, but it's nice.

Ready to drop *now*.

Hold it!...There's something wrong, Point 01. Your beam's not functioning...talk to me, talk to me!
...Am using manual beam. Point 01. Your beam—it's on, but it's functioning as an energy drain.
My back-up is being drained by your beam! Point 01!!!


...CLEAN-UP IS NEARLY COMPLETE, ALAN. I'M SORRY.
Forget it. It's not your fault. That tractor set-up was always screwed . . . almost wasted *me* once.
DO YOU WANT ME TO ORDER...
No. Listen, it was a mistake to have ordered her in the first place! We got a *job* to do out here.
ANOTHER DRINK, SIR?
Sure!
THE END


ZOOKS!
©by VAUGHN BODE
LAVENDER DUNE ROCKET BASE, DIS IS SERGEANT SUNFLOWER IN POLLYWOG 17-V VICTOR, I WANTS PERMISSION TO ENTER YOUR AREA FOR A LANDING..
PW17-V
17
PW17-V VICTOR YOUSE GOT CLEARANCE TO LAND, JUST DON'T BUZZ DA LAUNCH PAD.
HEY, DAT'S A GREAT IDEA!!
©1970 VAUGHN BODE D1
I THINK I'LL BUZZ DA LAUNCH PAD...
MAN, WHO WOULDA THOUGHT: ME, SGT. SUNFLOWER GONNA BE THA FIRST LIZARD IN HISTORY TO GO INTO ORBIT!
©1973 by VAUGHN BODE


HOT STUFF!!, MY MOMMY, REST HER EGG LAYIN' SOUL, WOULD BE PROUD TO KNOWS HER BOY, SUNFLOWER, GONNA BE THA FIRST LIZARD EVER TO GO INTO ORBIT, AN DAT'S MY ROCKET DOWN THERE!
JUS' LOOKIT DAT BEAUTIFUL MOTHER!!
SERGEANT SUNFLOWER, DIS IS LAVENDER. DUNE CONTROL-ITOLD YOUSE NOT TO BUZZ DA DUMB ROCKET!
©1970 VAUGHN BODE' D2
OKAY, OKAY. DON'T BUST YER FAT FLAP! I'LL LAND IN A HOUR OR SO..
COUGH SPUTTER P-P
YIPES! I IS OUTTA FUEL!
SAY YOUSE GUYS IN DA TOWER, I IS OUTTA FUEL! SHOULD I BAIL OUT OF MY MACHINE?
SERGEANT SUNFLOWER, YOU IS RIGHT OVER DA STUPID RUNWAY. WHY DON'T YOU GLIDE IN FOR A DEAD STICK LANDING.
180
WELL, OKAY, I'LL LAND, BUT I'D RATHER BAIL OUT. I GOT A NEW CHUTE I WANTS TO TRY...
SUNFLOWER, DON'T LAND YOU FORGOT!
©1970 VAUGHN BODE' D3
SCREECH!
SERGEANT, YOU BUMBLING DOPE! YOU FORGOT TO PUT YOU WHEELS DOWN!
SORRY BOUT DAT... MY MIND'S ON DA TRIP I TAKEN' INTO ORBIT...
TO BE CONTINUED...

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COLLECTOR'S ITEMS

HM #1/APRIL, 1977: With Space Punks, the first chapters of Corben's Den and Bode's Sunpot, an excerpt from the best-selling fantasy novel *The Sword of Shannara*, Harzak and more ($5.00)

HM #2/MAY, 1977. Introducing Roger, the paranoid puppet. Virgo, the cosmic maiden. Russian astronauts. Conquering Armies: the ultimate rock festival while Harzak, Sunpot and Den continue ($4.00)

HM #3/JUNE, 1977: Features *Night Images*, poetry by Conan's creator, Robert E. Howard, with illustrations by Corben; Macedo's Rockblitz, the highly praised Shells, the first chapter of Davis's World Apart, more Den, Sunpot and Harzak. ($3.00)

HM #4/JULY, 1977: Is a must for Moebius fans with 12 pages of Harzak and his s/f spy saga. The Long Tomorrow: also the end of Sunpot; further adventures of Den, the psychic Nep Sumo and the horrible Gold Queen. ($3.00)

HM #5/AUGUST, 1977. In which the saga of Polonius begins. The Long Tomorrow concludes. World Apart and Den continue, all amidst talking plants, samurai puppets, sex and violence ($3.00)

HM #6/SEPTEMBER, 1977: Galactic Aztecs, cosmic cowboys, hysterical, shrubbery, chemically-induced sanity, a Moebius space opera, more World Apart, Den and Polonius, plus a Roger Zelazny short story. ($3.00)

HM #7/OCTOBER, 1977. Packed with knights, ladies, jet pilots, insanity, reincarnation and other harmless pastimes. 10 pages of color Moebius: the Airtight Garage, Den, and Polonius *redux*; and fiction by Theodore Sturgeon. ($3.00)

HM #8/NOVEMBER, 1977: With nine color pages by Moebius and Rimbaud, the conclusions of both Polonius and World Apart; ex-pugs, intellectual mollusks, birth and death stars, and a great new Harlan Ellison story—the heaviest *Heavy Metal* yet! ($3.00)

HM #9/DECEMBER, 1977: This time, went up to 104 pages to bring you the complete saga of Druillet's anti-hero Vuzz; a chapter from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*; and Fortune's Fool by Chaykin and Wein, in addition to full-color contributions from regulars Corben, Macedo, Claveloux and Moebius. ($3.00)

HM #10/JANUARY, 1978. We got Morrow to illustrate Zelazny, we got Lob and Pichard to update Ulysses, we got Meehan to do a *Heavy Metal* calendar girl, we concluded Conquering Armies, and continued Den. Of course, you *knew* about the Incas' fog lights, and the time warp ($3.00)

HM #11/FEBRUARY, 1978: Wherein begin the new adventures of Barbarella, naked to her enemies and nude to her friends, and of Urm the Foo, in his quest for revenge. Wraparound cover and center spread by Nino. A trip to Venus, the Crusader and the Witch, and Moebius down the rabbit hole. With the usual unusual like Den. ($3.00)

HM #12/MARCH, 1978: In which we learn the eves of witch-hunts and the perils of witchcraft; the problems of mass transit, and the dangers of hitchhiking. Plus: the first swashbuckling episode of Onion. More Barbarella. More Urm. And still more Den. ($3.00)

HM #13/APRIL, 1978. Big deal first anniversary issue, with 30-page insert from Paradise 9 by all concerned. Also, amidst the king must die, death's duel and the undead, Barbarella gives birth. Oh, and the sexual acrobatic epilogue to Den. ($3.00)

HM #14/MAY, 1978: Does in Urm the Mad, locates El Dorado, goes to pieces on a bicycle, buys a cannibal clock, time-travels, and cerebrally tap-dances with Nino. Not to mention Onon and Barbarella. ($3.00)

HM #15/JUNE 1978: This time, we go too far. For instance, the exotic new Corben, Shalvazad, the neurotic Evolution, the ecstatic, More Than Human, the erotic Barbarella and the erratic Them Changes. And an excerpt from Sabre and the origins of Heilman. ($3.00)

HM #16/JULY, 1978. A happy ending to Barbarella, a sad ending to 1996, the resumption of Druillet's Gail, the further adventures of Heilman and Onion. More Than Human cont'd, and another piece of the Arabian Nights tale from Corben. ($3.00)

HM #17/AUGUST, 1978. Looks like more of the same: with Onon, Corben's Arabian Nights, Heilman, and the last More Than Human. Except Druillet's Gail gets going again; the Off-Season starts; cannibal robots get involved, and somebody finally touches the right button. ($3.00)

HM #18/SEPTEMBER, 1978: Starring Sindbad the Sailor, Esorel, Queen of the Bubble Women, the Major's fiancée, two off-season detectives, Arcane the Warrior, Heilman, Onon, and Lone Sloane on Gail. Harlan Ellison's sewer full of babies. Plus miscellaneous gags and wheezes. ($3.00)

HM #19/OCTOBER, 1978: All Hallows breaks loose with an excerpt from Dawn of the Dead, the puberty rites of dragons, a zombie android called Exterminator, Ellison's Glass Goblin illustrated and the onset of McKie's So Beautiful and So Dangerous. Moreeene exploits of heroes Sindbad, Gail and Onion. ($3.00)

HM #20/NOVEMBER, 1978: A full 20 page excerpt from the Chaykin/Delany *Empire*, while Sindbad's dragon explodes, the Exterminator escapes, Sloane makes war, the Sad Man disappears, Grubert arrives too late, and Heilman is reborn for the final time. So Beautiful and So Dangerous, part two, and more Diabolica. Planet. ($3.00)

HM #21/DECEMBER, 1978. Putting the Easter bunny back into Xmas, and wrapping up Onon and Off-Season, with sinister Tarot greeting cards, wreaths and wraiths, creches, crashes, and a prezzy for you—a 12 page Moebius murder yarn! ($2.00)

HM #22/JANUARY, 1979. This one's full of elephants, for some reason. Plus our first Trina, and a pinup, and Gail's shoot-em-up finale. Some decapitation, a space siren, and the android takes over the ship. More McKie and Corben. Whattaya want? ($2.00)

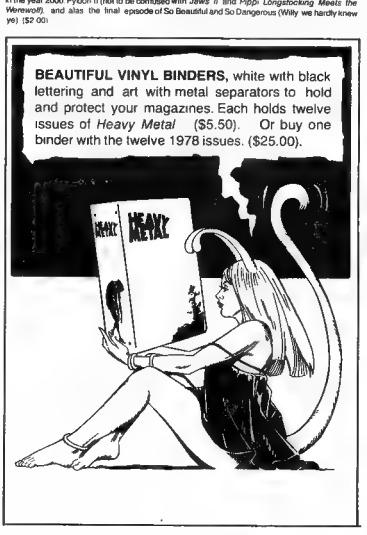
HM #23/FEBRUARY, 1979: Our February fantasies feature the onset of the tale of the Star crown. We continue with Sindbad and McKie's So Beautiful and So Dangerous. More Moebius and Bilal. Macedo brings us chapter four of life in Metropolis 5, and by popular demand, Galactic Geographic. There's the story of a star-nosed mole and much, much more. ($2.00)

HM #24/MARCH, 1979: Twenty pages of Chaykin's illustrated *Stars My Destination*, for openers. A punk rumble, android fib, titanic tits, Star Crown II, and Ellison's late show. Also hardware and superstition. ($2.00)

HM #25/APRIL, 1979: Second birthday bash, with Chaykin's great new Gideon Faust tale, an Alien portfolio, Val Mayerik's Time Out, the first chapter of Pyroon, fiction by Arthur Cover, ghost ships, robotic miscegenation, and other goodies for you. ($2.00)

HM #26 /MAY, 1979: The almost all American issue, with fifteen stateside entries, including part one of The Illustrated Alien, the complete Entropics, a new Gray Morrow, and more of Corben's Sindbad. (Except for Druillet's Disco and a Proust joke.) ($2.00)

HM #27/JUNE-1979: From the guys who brought you the pompadour, Charles De Gaulle, and fishnet stockings... we proudly present 54 pages of the wild and wacky adventures of Captain Future. Plus: The second episode of the Illustrated Alien. McKie's psychic vision of Mick Jagger in the year 2000. Pyroon II (not to be confused with *Jaws II* and *Pippi Longstocking Meets the Werewolf*), and alas, the final episode of So Beautiful and So Dangerous (Willy we hardly knew ye). ($2.00)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Ecch! The Young Gnome

by Nicholas V. Yermakov

I'm trying to remember what it was like before Ecch. I can't.

It all started when I broke the amber bit on my pipe. It was a gorgeous Greek briar freehand, carved out of aged, three-hundred-fifty-year-old wood. Standing in the back of the shop watching Don putting the final coat of polish on it had been a special joy. He was one of the few true craftsmen left and, like all artists, he didn't like to have people watching him work, not even friends. He didn't mind it so much when he turned out a bulldog, or a bent Dublin, or possibly a copy of the popular Castello rock grain, since those were fairly undemanding pieces. But when he was working on a freehand, one of his ornately carved, convoluted beauties, that back room was sacred ground. To enter it meant certain death, very possibly from a thrown scratch awl sharpened to a lethal point.

Connoisseurs descended on Don's freehands with a drooling urgency. It was rare for one of his custom pieces to sit on the shelf for as long as one week.

Don was the major attraction at Germaine's. Looking like a denizen of the Black Forest in his overalls and lumberjack shirt, his brown beard bristling and his wild hair ponytailed in two places at the back (it took two rubber bands to hold it all, one at the neck, one further down), his strident voice was almost always raised, either to berate someone for bringing him a corncob to repair or to yell at the man from the Greek restaurant who had brought the gyros but forgotten the yogurt sauce. Once, a hapless businessman walked in smoking one of those tricky little metal-bowled pipes with an aerated stem. Don chased him halfway down the block, waving a deadly ten-inch Bowie knife and shouting "Philistine!" at the top of his lungs. The man barely escaped with his life. I loved Don dearly

One day, I had no time to stay and chat. I had come in to pick up the pipe that I had left with Don so that he could replace the bit. Ordinarily, he did this while the customer waited, but this piece required a carved and twisted bit, and that took a little time. I had paid him in advance, so when I came in and found that he was out to lunch, the proprietor told me to go on in the back and pick it up myself. Don had, as usual, done a wonderful job. Since I was in a rush, I scooped up the pipe and placed it in my pocket. And that was how it started.

That night, I settled down to rest with a good book, my favorite jasmine tea, and my pipe. I packed the pipe, absently, as I scanned my bookshelves. I chose an old favorite by Fritz Leiber and plopped down in my chair, ready to enjoy a perfect evening. I placed the pipe between my teeth, noting that it seemed somewhat heavier than I remembered it. I set a match to it. The tobacco erupted with a small explosion and showered me with sparks. I dropped the pipe.

"Great horny toads, I'm being roasted!" came a voice that sounded like a character from an old Warner Brothers cartoon. To my astonishment, a tiny man crawled *out of the bowl of my pipe*, shoving tobacco out of his way and coughing and hacking as if with a fit of terminal tuberculosis. He dusted himself off, patting at his smoking clothing, and glowered at me.

"You syphilitic goon! You egg-sucking weasel! You overstuffed troglodyte! You could have killed me! Not only that, you dropped my goddamn pipe!"

"*Your* pipe?" I muttered weakly, not believing my eyes.

"Yes, *my* pipe. I sweated *blood* over that thing! It took me two whole days to make it and you go dropping it like that. I've got half a mind to take it away from you. You don't deserve it."

"I can't be stoned," I mumbled to myself. "That was *tobacco* in that pipe, *tobacco*."

"Yes, and that's another thing," the apparition continued. "Penque soaked in rum is not tobacco. You might as well smoke sawdust. And drinking tea while smoking one of my pipes is downright indecent. Chateâuneuf-du-Pape, perhaps, a glass of Bordeaux, gad, even *Lancer* would be better, but *tea?* You probably put catsup on your steak, as well."

"Now, wait a minute! What the hell is going on here? I can't be dreaming, I burned myself and it hurt, goddamnit. Who or what in hell are you and what were you doing in my pipe bowl?" I began looking around for a shoe, a heavy book, anything.

"I might ask you the same thing. Where am I? And who are you, for that matter? And what's the idea of trying to broil me?"

I reached for my cap, lying on the radiator. It looked like a good thing to trap the little bugger with.

"You try that and you'll be sorry," he warned, guessing my motives.

"The hell you say." I grabbed the cap. It disappeared in a puff of dirty smoke that smelled vaguely of Burley and cavendish cut with a touch of brimstone. My hand was singed.

"You son of..." I jumped to my feet and proceeded to try to stomp the little bastard. The little bandit was quick as lightning, darting in and out between my legs, screaming unprintable obscenities at the top of his lungs. I saw that I was getting nowhere. He was just too fast for me. I sat down, breathing heavily. He stood a short distance away, safely out of reach, trying to catch his breath. We had reached an impasse.

He looked like a tiny little old man. He stood perhaps three-quarters of an inch tall, though his voice made him sound like Gargantua. He had a long white beard and a pointy red cap that had fallen off, and he was dressed in tiny little green overalls. He reminded me a little of Don.

"I don't believe it," I said.

"Yeah? Well, up yours," he replied.

"What are you?"

"I'm a gnome," he said, drawing himself up (and if you think that *sounds* silly, you should have seen how it looked).

"I thought gnomes were taller."

"What do you know about gnomes?" he countered.

"They live in Europe, have long white beards, wear clashing colors, and hide in cabbage patches?"

"Cute, cute. Did you *like* having your hand singed?"

It was just what I needed, a smart-ass gnome to ruin my perfect evening. I went over to my desk and started rummaging around. I knew I had some insect repellent in there someplace. Aha! Good old Raid. The old reliable House and Garden. I turned around, poised to strike. He was gone.

"Come out, come out, wherever you are!" I sang.

"Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin," came a voice from somewhere back in the recesses of my bookshelves.

A traditionalist, yet. And diabolically clever. He knew I'd never spray my beloved Lovecraft first editions. I put the can down, defeated. "All right, you win. Truce?"

"I may be little, but I'm not stupid."

I had him located, peeking out from behind *The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath*. "No, seriously, come on out. I won't try anything, I promise. What do you want me to do, swear on the Bible or something?"

"Feh."

Feh? "What did you day? Did you say *feh?*"

"So sue me, I'm Jewish."

"I don't believe it."

"You want to hear me say a *broche?* Come on, give me a break. What are you, an anti-Semite or something?"

"Okay, okay, I believe you. A Jewish gnome. Now I've seen everything. Come on out."

He waddled out to the edge of the bookshelf, hitching up his overalls. "Okay, I'm out. Now what?"

I shrugged. "I don't know. You hungry?"

He shrugged back. "Sure. Whatchya got?"

"I don't know. What do gnomes eat?"

"You got any Chinese food? Some pizza, maybe?"

"I might have some cereal. You like Cap'n Crunch?"

"*Oy vey.* No thanks, I think I'll pass."

"I've got a couple of cold pork chops I could warm up...."

"Deeper and deeper...."

"Sorry. How about a beer?"

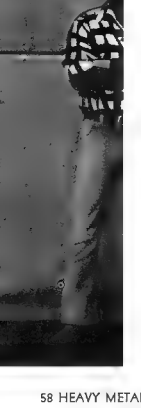
"Domestic or imported?"

"Foster's lager?"

"My God, the man's not a total loss. Lay on, MacDuff."

I poured myself a glass and let him have his in a demitasse cup. It was the smallest thing I had. He quaffed it in a single gulp and held it out for more. I refilled it.

Illustration by **Roger Stine**



"So you can drink. What else can gnomes do, besides burning people's hats up?"

"We're all craftsmen. I'm a woodworker myself I made that pipe you're smoking. Also, we're some terrific spitters. I can nail a cockroach at one hundred paces."

"I thought Don made this pipe "

"That *tummler?* He can barely whittle. *I* make the pipes. He sits there churning out the easy stuff, but he can't even make a lousy apple without sand spots. I do all the work and that *gonif* takes the credit."

"You mean to tell me that all this time..." I waved a hand at my pipe collection, every piece signed by Don. "...all these are yours?"

He appraised the pipes. "Not bad You've got good taste. Those are some of my best pieces."

"That's incredible!"

"That one there gave me a lot of trouble." He pointed to a large freehand with a particularly deep bowl, the one I liked to smoke while at the typewriter. Its natural knurling had been incorporated beautifully into the design. "So you're the one I have to thank, eh? Don told me the customer wanted a really deep bowl. I was spitting up sawdust for a whole week "

"Sorry about that."

"Ah, comes with the territory "

"My name's Nicholas Yermakov, by the way. My friends call me Nick." I started to offer him my hand, then realized what a ludicrous gesture it was

"Mine is Excelsior."

"*Excelsior?*"

"You should talk about names. My friends call me Ecch "

"You call those friends?"

"Yeah, how about that? Every time somebody bites into a piece of liverwurst, my name gets taken in vain. I refuse to be in the same room with anybody watching television "

"I see what you mean. Are there many gnomes? Around here, I mean. See, no offense, but I always thought you people were a myth."

"Well, our p.r isn't what it used to be. There aren't too many people around who believe in us anymore. A couple of writers; some Irishmen who insist on calling us 'the little people,' which really pisses me off. At least one actor that I know of, but he doesn't talk about us anymore since he swore off the booze. Besides, there aren't as many of us as there used to be. High mortality rate. Know what I mean?"

"Like, how? Disease?"

"Nah, we don't get sick. We have natural enemies, though."

"You mean like cats and other larger animals?"

"Hell, no. I happen to like cats. We get along just fine with animals, no matter what size they are. I used to have a pet horse when I was a kid. Some farmer though it was his, but the horse knew. Nah, I'm talking about dirt bikes."

"Dirt bikes?"

"Yeah, you know. Yamahas, Kawasakis, Suzukis, Pentons, Huskvarnas. Maicos are the worst. More of my people got torn up by Maicos than any other bike. Every time they hold the International Six Day Trials, there's a mass exodus."

"Gee, I feel guilty. I happen to ride a motorcycle."

"Not a dirt bike?" his eyes narrowed suspiciously.

"No, I've got a BMW And I stay on the roads "

"Well, that's all right. We burrow underneath roads And BMWs are made in Bavaria, which is one point in your favor What's more, they're quiet Do you have any *idea* what it's like burrowing underneath a freeway and having a Harley-Davidson go by overhead? *Brrrr.*" He shuddered.

"How did you happen to meet Don?" I asked

"Well, now that's a long story."

"I have time."

"Dyno-mite That's another thing, see—us gnomes just love to shoot the breeze. Let's have another beer." I poured, and kept on refilling his cup. He sure could put it away I wondered how he could possibly hold it all

"See, my people came over here on the *Mayflower*. "

"*On the* Mayflower?"

"What are you, an echo? Stop with the repeating already. You got ears; you heard right. What did you think, they were *all* Pilgrims? I see what you mean, though. They'd shit if they knew there were Jews on the *Mayflower*. So keep it under your hat "

"Right "

"Okay, where was I?"

"On the *Mayflower*."

"Gotcha. Well, let me tell you something about Puritans, *bubee*. They're the single most joyless bunch of bastards on the face of this earth. That's why there ain't too many of 'em around anymore. Though I've got my doubts about Johnny Cash."

"You mean you were *there?*"

"Well, I'm no spring chicken, sweetheart. Anyway, to condense slightly, I'll give you the *Reader's Digest* version. We didn't get along too badly with that crowd until Cotton Mather came along There was one prize *schmuck*, let me tell you. The first of the unbelievers. All fire and brimstone. 'Sinners in the hands of an angry God' and all that bullshit. Not for me, thank you. We went off to live with the Indians. But the settlers had to queer that scene, too. You know your history, you know what happened. Who the hell can set up a community with that fighting going on? To say nothing of the Revolutionary War. *Oy vey!* I was all for going home then and there, except things weren't exactly hunky-dory in the old country, either. Bad vibes. My family got split up around then. One-word and the kids went off to stay with General Howe. They figured it was just a police action that would blow over soon. Me, I ran into a likable old fart name Ben Franklin."

"You knew Ben Franklin? What was he like?"

"A lot like Don, actually. Lots of laughs, only he ripped me off a lot Like I said, a lot like Don."

"What do you mean, he ripped you off?"

"You don't *really* believe he discovered electricity, do you? Crap, we had microwave ovens as far back as Charlemagne He *did* invent bifocals, though, I'll give him credit for that. See, I got drunk one day and knocked his glasses off the desk and wound up putting 'em back together wrong. Mixed up the lenses with another busted pair he had. I was bombed, what did I know? He took it from there, though. Anyway, we went to Paris together and I would have stayed, too, only he talked me out of it. Long story. Remind me to tell you about Marie Antoinette sometime A real hot little number."

"Wait a minute. Listen, you mind if I get this down on tape? This stuff's terrific."

"Get him. Richard Nixon Sure, go ahead, what the hell."

I got out my Sony and he continued. I kept running back to the refrigerator for more beer. This guy had a bladder I couldn't believe.

It went on that way for most of the night. I have it all on tape. I'm going to try and sort it out sooner or later The only problem is that as Ecch drank, he began to ramble more and more and lose his thread and screw up the continuity. And I was hard pressed to keep up with him. No three-quarters-of-an-inch-tall (short?) gnome was going to drink *me* under the table. I heard about how he was with General Custer at the Little Big Horn and how he survived the massacre by hiding out under old George's hat. He told me about flying with the Wright Brothers and inventing the steel-belted radial and ghost-writing *Tropic of Capricorn* for Henry Miller, who was also a "likable old fart." According to Ecch, he was the one who began the psychedelic era by turning Timothy Leary on to acid; and Bob Dylan would never have written "Positively Seventh Avenue," a protest song about the garment district, if it wasn't for his influence.

I didn't really *believe* any of this, you understand. I mean, it's hard enough believing in gnomes without being asked to accept that the little munchkin sitting on your desk actually *slept* with Gertrude Stein. I mean, enough is enough

I don't remember who passed out first. I awoke in the morning with a killer hangover. I could actually *hear* the steady drip-drip-drip of excess stomach acid. I crawled over to the bathroom and ran cold water on my head. Then I fumbled with some Alka Seltzer and somehow managed to get it down. I couldn't see Ecch anywhere.

"Ecch! (Ow, God, *ssssh!*) Ecch, where the hell are you?"

I heard a basso belch in reverb. He was curled up in the bottom of an empty can of Foster's lager. I picked up the can and shook it.

"*Earthquaaaake!*" Ecch vanished in a puff of smoke and reappeared inside my three-way bulb, the one I used in the reading lamp. He tried to breathe and couldn't. I watched him turning blue.

"What the hell are you doing in there?" I unscrewed the bulb and shattered it.

"*Oy*, my ears," he moaned, rolling around on my table. "Last time I tried that on a hangover, I wound up inside Don's refrigerator. Sheesh! You *had* to shake that can For a moment I thought I was back in L.A Remind me to tell you about the time I stayed with Linda Ronstadt. Did you know that she—"

"Not this early in the morning, okay?"

The phone rang and we both clapped our hands to our ears. I staggered over and answered it.

"Yermakov?" It was Don. No one else shouted on the phone at seven A M. with the single exception of a Hollywood screenwriter of my acquaintance. "You got my gnome?"

I winced, holding the receiver away from my ear. "It's Don," I said. "He wants to know if I've got his gnome, You want to talk to him?"

"Are you kidding? That's all I need this morning, him screaming in my ear No thanks."

"He doesn't want to talk to you, Don."

"What? Put that little bastard on the phone!"

"He says to put you on the phone."

"I don't want to talk to him."

"He doesn't want to talk to you, Don."

"Listen here, you gnomenapper, you get him back here on the double, you hear me? I've got orders to fill!"

"He says he has orders to fill." I was beginning to get fed up with playing go-between.

"Tell that egg sucker I'm through. I've had it with that slavedriver. I'm retired."

"Don? He says he's retired."

"*Retired?* Now you listen to me, you tell that goldbrick to cut the crap and get his little ass back down here. I've got work for him to do. I don't want to hear none of this retired shit!"

"Well, maybe he's tired, Don."

"Tired? Are you kidding? He's three hundred and sixty years old! He's in the prime of life! He's got a least another five hundred years of work in him. Hey, wait a minute. You're not thinking of keeping him for yourself, are you?"

"Oh, I don't know. He tells some pretty interesting stories."

"That little liar? Don't tell me you're falling for all that nonsense? Did he tell you about Linda Ronstadt?"

"Not yet, but I'm supposed to remind him."

"Yeah, well, you just better get him back here, that's all I've got to say."

"Now, look, Don—"

"*You* look. You return my gnome to me or, so help me, I'll. I'll sue, that's what I'll do!"

"You'll sue to get your gnome back?"

"You're damn right I will!"

"That should prove interesting. Look, I'll tell you what, let me talk to him, okay? I'll get back to you." I hung up the phone. "He says he'll sue."

"So? Let him sue. I'll be your lawyer. Who do you think prepared the brief on Dreyfus?"

"He was found guilty, as I recall."

"Well, I just prepared the brief. The lummox wouldn't let me in the courtroom."

"Look, Ecch, old buddy, why don't you consider going back? Don needs you. Besides, I really don't want to get him angry. Hell, he's got more knives than a Bronx high school. He shoots a .308 match rifle."

"So who do you think made the stock?"

"Oh, man, I really can't handle this right now. Nothing personal, Ecch, you're a nice sort of gnome, but... I mean, jeez, I can't have you staying here. How am I going to explain you to my friends?"

"Tell them I'm your cousin from Secaucus."

"Be serious."

"No, huh? What about Sandusky?"

"I give up."

"Look, I know this is all a little sudden," he said, "but think about it. I'm really good to have around the house. I can get rid of your roaches for you."

"Wonderful."

"I can make you pipes for free?"

"Hmmmm..."

"I could help you with your work! Did I tell you about how I wrote for Henry Miller?"

"No! No, no way. I don't care if you write a Hugo winner every time you sit down, you keep your grubby mitts off my Underwood."

"Think it over."

"No."

"Look, I can get you in. I'm a personal friend of Harlan Ellison."

"*That* I believe. But no chance."

Of course, it didn't work. I couldn't stay awake all the time. I knew by my dwindling supply of typing paper and manila envelopes that Ecch had embarked upon his ghost-writing career. The only problem was, he was churning out stories like the one about a starship that was on a "five-year mission" to worlds fifty light-years away. It smacked suspiciously of Horatio Hornblower. Then there was the one about a boy from outer space called Fluke Dogwalker who had a pet robot called B9K9. The worst one dealt with a neurotic young truck driver who was terrorized by flashing lights until he developed an obsession with the Great Pyramid of Cheops. Editors began to write me threatening letters, and I was forced to go back to writing advertising copy and recording radio jingles. My social life was shot to hell. One time, I brought a lady over. He waited until we got comfortable; then he popped out with a pocket Instamatic, and it was all over.

"Ecch," I told him finally, "you've got to stop. You're ruining my life. I can't go on like this! I beg you, go back to making pipes. At least you do that well!"

He was gravely offended. He didn't speak to me for days. He stopped writing stories under my name, but all my pipes suddenly went sour. My beloved meerschaum calabash began to emit an odor of stale sweat socks every time I smoked it. My Ropp cherry wood became infested with fruit flies. And my treasured Charatan straight with the egg-shaped bowl grew a Medico filter that I couldn't remove no matter how hard I tried. I called Don.

"Your gnome is driving me crazy."

"It serves you right for stealing him."

"I didn't *mean* to steal him. He stowed away inside my pipe!"

"You mean you want to give him back?"

"Don, old buddy, I'd *love* to give him back, only he won't leave!"

"Ah, he's *meshugge*. He used to drive me crazy all the time. How do you think I got like this? I used to do fine for myself as a rock musician until he came along. Wrote a song for me and I used it. Only trouble was, Springsteen wrote it first and he almost beat the shit outta me."

"I didn't know that."

"Yeah, a *lot* you don't know. I should tell you what happened the time he came up with a terrific new blend he decided to call 'Don's Delight.' Sold great until the FDA and the BATF found out it was made with *Amanita muscaria*. I almost went to jail!"

"Gee, I thought I had troubles! I should think you'd be glad to be rid of him."

"The little *momzer* sorta grows on ya. I kinda miss him."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that, Don, because I've got an idea, but I'm going to have to have your help. First of all, I need to borrow your wheel for a few days, and some tools as well. Let me have some crummy pieces of wood that you've had to reject and some bit stock. Then..."

"What the hell is that?" asked Ecch, indignantly pointing to the fruits of my labors.

"Those are pipes," I replied.

"You call that *dreck* pipes?" He was incredulous.

"Well, you screwed up all my other ones, so I decided to make a few for myself. They came out pretty well, if I do say so myself." I held up a horribly mangled piece of briar that looked like it had been hammered out with a cold chisel. "It's a pretty interesting shape, wouldn't you say?"

"You're kidding, right? This is a joke. You did this awful thing to a piece of wood and you call it a *pipe?*"

"Well, that's one of my early efforts. This one came out a little better." I showed him a piece of briar root that I had sawed into a perfect square. I had painted it white and put dots around it, so it looked like something you roll when you play monopoly. "I had some trouble with the stem," I told him. "It busted off, so I stuck it back on with Krazy Glue." Around the edges of the "stem" could be seen giant gobs of hardened plastic. "As a matter of fact," I continued, "I'm having so much fun with this, I think I'll go into business with Don and make pipes for a living. It's really not as hard as I thought it was. All this noise about 'craftsmen'; really, *anyone* could do this."

Twin jets of steam began to shoot from his ears.

"You know," I said, "I'm going to forget all about writing. Let's you and me be pipemakers together, what do you say? With a little bit of practice, I'll bet you I could do as well as you in a couple of weeks, maybe, huh?"

That did it. He began hopping up and down and swearing in a language I had never heard before. I thought he was going to have apoplexy. Books began flying out of my shelves and sailing across the room. My humidors erupted, firing salvos of tobacco into the air. My newly carved "pipes" burst into flame. Typing paper filled the air like confetti and my Underwood began to clatter away of its own volition, typing out obscenities not even Tolkien could translate. The window shattered with a crash, and, with one finger up his nose and another held up in a defiant gesture, Ecch leapt into the air and was gone, leaving a cloud of smoke behind him. I *hate* the smell of brimstone.

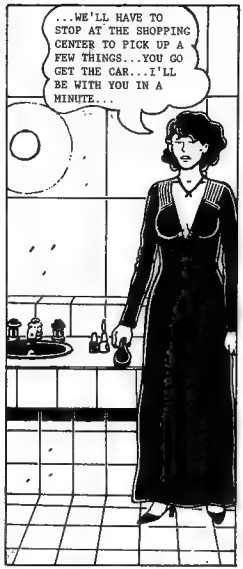
Well, Don is happy now. Ecch is back at work, making beautiful, one-of-a-kind pipes that are truly something to behold. Don is developing quite a reputation, thanks to Ecch. They were really meant for each other. Since his secret is out, Don doesn't mind letting me "watch him work" now. I stand there in the corner late at night, listening to them berate each other, and I feel like I'm at home with Mom and Dad again.

My pipes have lost their sour taste and I've resumed my writing career. Still, it doesn't seem the same. The little guy *did* grow on me, just like Don said. And I think some of me rubbed off on him, as well. Once a week, I leave a case of Foster's lager in the frig and some fresh typing paper by the Underwood. In the morning, the paper's gone and there's a pile of empty beer cans on the rug. And there are several Harold Robbins novels on my shelves that *I* sure didn't buy. Frankly, I'm a little worried. ●

shelter — chantal montellier

...THE RAID LASTED UNTIL 2.00 P.M.... OFFICIALS WARNED OF THE IMMINENT USE OF THE ATOMIC WEAPON...THE DEATH COUNT IS 128, BUT THOSE IN CHARGE AT THE SCENE ESTIMATE THE NUMBER TO BE AT LEAST TEN TIMES THAT...FROM THE BUZZING OF FLIES SURROUNDING THE ALREADY DECOMPOSING HEAPS OF CORPSES...
HELLO?
...WHICH LIE BARELY PROTECTED FROM THE SUN. THE BRANCHES OF TREES CAST THEIR SHADOWS ON THE BRIGHT COLORS OF THE WOMEN'S DRESSES--MANY HAVE ALREADY DIED FROM THE BOMBS SOME VETERAN REPORTERS WERE SICK, SO SHOCKED WERE THEY BY THE PESTILENCE AND THE HORROR OF THE CARNAGE ..
PAMMY?...HI! WE'LL BOTH BE THERE...FOR SURE...WELL, YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I LOVE THE COUNTRY! ...LITA? HA!... JUST THE SIGHT OF A MUDDY FARMYARD AND SHE'S BOUND TO GET TETANUS!...
..THE HOSPITALS ARE OVERFLOWING... BEYOND DOUBT, THE MOST PATHETIC VICTIMS OF THIS WAR ARE THE CHILDREN. THE CONFLICT SEEMS TO BE SPREADING TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES ..WHICH FROM NOW ON WILL BE UNDER SEVERE STRAIN ..MASS FUNERALS EVERY-WHERE. .
YES...LITA'S IN THE BATH-ROOM...OH, I DON'T KNOW... FIVE...TEN MINUTES...O.K. I'LL TELL HER...NO, NO, BEFORE THE CURFEW, OBVIOUSLY... NO, I'VE STOPPED LISTENING TO IT...WELL, WE'LL SEE...YES... CATCH YOU LATER...
PANORA
PANORA
1

PAMMY JUST CALLED... YOU'LL HAVE TO HURRY IT UP A LITTLE...IF WE'RE GOING TO GET THERE BEFORE THE CURFEW!...
...YES... I'M READY...


...WE'LL HAVE TO STOP AT THE SHOPPING CENTER TO PICK UP A FEW THINGS...YOU GO GET THE CAR...I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A MINUTE...

...THEY WERE PATROLLING THE HALLS...THEY ASKED TO SEE MY PAPERS...
NOT AGAIN!

...YES...I THINK THEY'RE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION.. THEY JUST CONCENTRATE ON YOUNG WOMEN AND FOREIGNERS ...THERE WERE FOUR OF THEM WITH DOGS... ALWAYS THE SAME ONES ...THEY MUST KNOW WHO I AM BY NOW...
2

WHAT TIME IS IT?
400 YARDS THE SHO
5:35.
hello!
MALL shelter
SHOPPING CENTER AAA
THE SHOPPING CENTER CLOSES AT 6:00... WE'RE JUST IN TIME...
hello!
shelter
WHAT ARE THEY BUYING?
I DON'KNOW... WE'LL SEE. WE HAVE TO HURRY!
2
3

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE ...MAY WE REMIND YOU THAT BECAUSE OF THE CURFEW...
YOU ARE IN THE FIRST SUBLEVEL... THE ANTI-ATOMIC PROTECTION IS 7.5%.
OUR SHOPPING CENTER WILL CLOSE NOT AT 7:00 BUT AT 6:00 SHARP, TO ALLOW OUR PERSONNEL TIME TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES...
4TH
PLEASE EXCUSE ANY INCONVENIENCE THIS SITUATION MAY CAUSE...
OUR SHOPPING CENTER WILL REOPEN ITS DOORS TOMORROW MORNING AT 7.00...
THANK YOU.
YOU ARE AT THE FIFTH SUBLEVEL ...THE ANTI-ATOMIC PROTECTION IS 35%
YOU AT AT THE EIGHTH SUBLEVEL...THE ANTI-ATOMIC PROTECTION IS 100%.
EXIT
CIGARETTES
MATCHES
LIGHTING PLEASE

TO BE CONTINUED...

HEY, BABY, AIN'T YOU STAYIN' WITH US?
NO WAY!
TELEFIELD
CHAPTER FIVE
BLAM
...NOT THAT COOL OF THE MASTER...
HEY, SHE DIDN'T EVEN WANT TO GO TO THE PSYCHOPLASMA!
OH!
HOW DARE YOU COME IN HERE?

GRAB!
AARHH
GREAT DEATH! THIS WOMAN'S MENTAL VIBRATIONS ARE EXCEPTIONAL!
AHHH!.. I KNOW WHO YOU ARE...
BITCH! YOU'RE ONE OF THAT DAMN GROUP OF TELEPATHICS WHO ARE OPPOSING MY POWER...
...BUT THAT WON'T GO ON FOR LONG!..
MONSTERS! LEAVE ME ALONE!
...BECAUSE YOU ARE GOING TO SUBMIT TO MY WILL! TOTALLY!
CYRIS... YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE FOLLOWED ME...

HA! HA! HA! COME HERE, MY NEW SLAVE! YOU, TOO, WILL COME TO KNOW THE RULE OF VON HELSINKE!
MY SUPER-PSYCHONIC RECEPTOR HERE CATALYZES THEIR ENERGY WHILE THE MOB GOES OFF ON THAT PARAPSYCHIC TRIP...
AND IT'S ALL CONTROLLED BY MY TELEPSYCO-PLASMIC PROGRAMMER! ALL OF THEM EXPERTS, ROBOTS, SLAVES... THE MOST INTELLIGENT CREATURES ON EARTH... ALL JUNKIES, ALL COMPLETELY IN MY POWER...
EVERYONE LIVING IN METROPOLIS IS IN MY POWER! I CONTROL THEM THROUGH THAT LITTLE GADGET OF MINE, THE ONE THOSE PLEASURE-LOVING FOOLS BUY BY THE THOUSANDS!
BUT THAT LITTLE MACHINE IS ACTUALLY AN ANTENNA THROUGH WHICH I ABSORB THEIR PSYCHIC ENERGY!
...THANKS TO THE JUNK, AND TO AN ELECTROMAGNETIC DEVICE I HAVE IMPLANTED IN THEIR BRAINS, THOSE CREATURES OBEY ME LIKE PUPPETS...
NOW, LET'S GO BELOW WHERE WE'LL FIND THE ESSENCE OF MY WORK!
OH, NO!
THE PSYCHOPLASMA!!!... SYNTHESIZED FROM THE DIVIDED NEUROPSYCHIC ENERGY OF THE HUMAN BEING! THIS RESERVOIR IS THE INEXHAUSTIBLE SUPPLY OF MY INVINCIBLE POWER!
...AND IT IS THE SECRET OF MY OWN IMMORTALITY!!!! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
BLOB!
BLOB!
BLOB!
BLOB!

ALL THE POWERFUL MEN IN THE WORLD ARE AT MY COMMAND! TOMORROW, I'LL CONDUCT A LITTLE INTERVIEW HERE WITH THE PRESIDENT, A PSYCHOPLASMA ADDICT HIMSELF WHO CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT MY LITTLE GADGETS!
...THE EVENT WILL BE TELEVISED, GIVING PEOPLE THE CHANCE TO SEE THE FACE OF THEIR MASTER...
TEE-HEE!
NOW, I HAPPEN TO KNOW THAT YOUR GROUP POSSESSES SOMETHING VERY PRECIOUS...
...A KIND OF GALACTIC FLOWER WITH SUPERNATURAL POWERS...
I SHALL DESTROY IT!... AND MAKE YOU ALL MY SLAVES!
NOW, WE'LL BEGIN THE TREATMENT!... THE FIRST FIX! HA! HA! HA!
NO, NO!
WHAT?... AAARGHHHH!... MY POWER!... I'M LOSING MY POWER!
MASTER! WHAT'S WRONG?
MY POWER.. IT'S LEAVING ME!... QUICK! I MUST HAVE... A NEW FIX!
THROW THAT SLAVE INTO THE DUNGEON!
...THE PSYCHOPLASMA... I HAVE TO HAVE ANOTHER SHOT!...

AAAHHH!...IS THAT A FULL DOSE? REMEMBER, I HAVE TO BE IN GOOD SHAPE TOMORROW FOR MY TELEVISION APPEAR...
YES, MASTER!
OH, GOD! WHAT A GHASTLY SITUATION! IF ONLY I COULD GET IN TOUCH WITH CEDRYLL TELEPATHICALLY... GOT TO CONCENTRATE...
...WHAT A STRANGE FEELING... VERY UN-USUAL...CYRIS...CYRIS... WHERE IS SHE RIGHT NOW?
THIS IS VERY DISTURBING! I'LL USE THE CRYSTAL FLOWER TO HELP ME CONCENTRATE...
BY THE COSMOS! IT'S MARVELOUS!
...ALL THE IN-FORMATION IT'S COMMUNICATING... I SEE... THE DANGER IS AT ITS HEIGHT!...
GOT TO ACT FAST!
FIRST, TO STELLA'S PLACE!
SSSS
NOBODY!
BUT...I SENSE A PRESENCE... SOMEONE'S COMING...

...IGGY!
CEDRYLL! SO, MY SENSES WEREN'T DECEIVING ME!
I FELT SOMETHING WAS HAPPENING! I CAME RIGHT HERE!
THIS PROVES IT! THE TELEPATHIC NETWORK WORKS! I'VE BEEN GETTING SOME REALLY HEAVY MESSAGES... I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT THEM WHILE WE WAIT FOR STELLA
AT DAWN
AAAHH! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
STELLA!
NO! NO! DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT! I MUSTN'T BETRAY MY MASTER!
...IT'S ALL RIGHT, STELLA, WE'RE YOUR FRIENDS.
WE ONLY WANT YOU TO HELP US FIND CYRIS...
THIS IS ALL JUST A DREAM, A NIGHTMARE WE CAN WAKE YOU FROM... WE'LL SAVE YOU FROM...
SOB!
...THIS INHUMAN SLAVERY... TREAT US... WE REALLY ARE YOUR FRIENDS!.. NOW, LOOK DEEP INTO MY EYES...THAT'S RIGHT...
POOR KID! SOME MALIGNANT BEING HAS A HOLD ON HER, BUT THERE'S STILL TIME TO SAVE HER!
THANKS TO MY ABILITY TO HYPNOTIZE HER, I'VE GOT ALL THE INFORMATION WE NEED! LET'S GO! WE'VE GOT TO FREE CYRIS FROM THE POWERS OF DARKNESS!
THERE'S A ZAPPER FOR YOU IN THE AEROCAR, IGGY! BELIEVE ME, THINGS ARE STARTING TO HEAT UP!

MEANWHILE...
THIS NEWS REMOTE IS GOING TO BE SENSATIONAL!
TV
FINALLY, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE BARON HELSINKE ON CAMERA...
...DON'T BE SO SURE, PAL! YOU'RE GOING TO LAND WHERE I TELL YOU!!
GOOD POOOG!
I'LL OFF THE FIRST DUDE WHO MOVES!
GULP! BUT, WHO ARE YOU?
GREAT! THE BOYS DID THEIR JOB! THE TV AEROVAN IS HEADING OUR WAY..
HA! HA! HA! THOSE PIGS ARE IN FOR A SURPRISE FROM THIS NEW TV CREW!
WE'LL WIPE OUT THOSE RATS WITH A SINGLE BLOW!! THEN THE PEOPLE WILL KNOW WHO THEIR REAL FRIENDS ARE!
WE'RE GETTING NEAR THE FORTRESS
NOW, STELLA, YOUR ROLE IS GOING TO BE VERY IMPORTANT!

USE THE RADIO CONTROL IN YOUR PENDANT TO CONTACT THE ROBOT GUARDS, AND GIVE THEM THE PASSWORD!
THEN ACT JUST AS IF YOU WERE ALONE UNTIL WE'RE INSIDE THE BUNKER. REMEMBER, IT'S CYRIS'S LIFE AT STAKE!
I... I'LL TRY...
THE TRICK WORKS, AND THE GATES OF THE FORTRESS OPEN FOR THE AEROCAR..
CYRIS... I CAN FEEL HER VIBES!..
I KNOW WHERE TO FIND HER! THIS WAY, QUICK!
THAT AEROCAR JUST CAME IN!... WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
IT WAS JUST ONE OF YOUR SLAVES RETURNING, MASTER. UMM.. THE TV VAN HAS REACHED THE GATES. THE PRESIDENT WILL BE HERE IN TEN MINUTES.
STAND BACK! I'LL BLAST IT OPEN!
FFZZZZZ
CEDRYLL! OH, CEDRYLL!
I SUGGEST WE GET A MOVE ON! THE VIBES IN THESE BARRACKS ARE EXTREMELY UNCOOL!...
TO BE CONTINUED...

ATTILA THE FROG

MMMM... IT'S GOOD TO TASTE FRESH MEAT AGAIN!
THAT'S FER SURE! THEY'RE NOT QUITE AS TASTY AS THE SALAMANDERS OF QUIDOX-5 BUT ONE MUST MAKE DO WITH WHATEVER PLANETARY FAUNA IS AVAILABLE!
RIBBIT...ER...THE END

DOWN
DEEP
OOPS!
BOING!
UMMM..

BOING!
SSHMURPLE BLURBLE BLUR
PANT! PANT! CAN'T GET OUT! BUT—I'M NOT DROWNING. !?!?
WELL, WELL... THIS IS SORT OF... -NICE! LIKE- FLYING!!
GUESS I'LL DO SOME EXPLORING.
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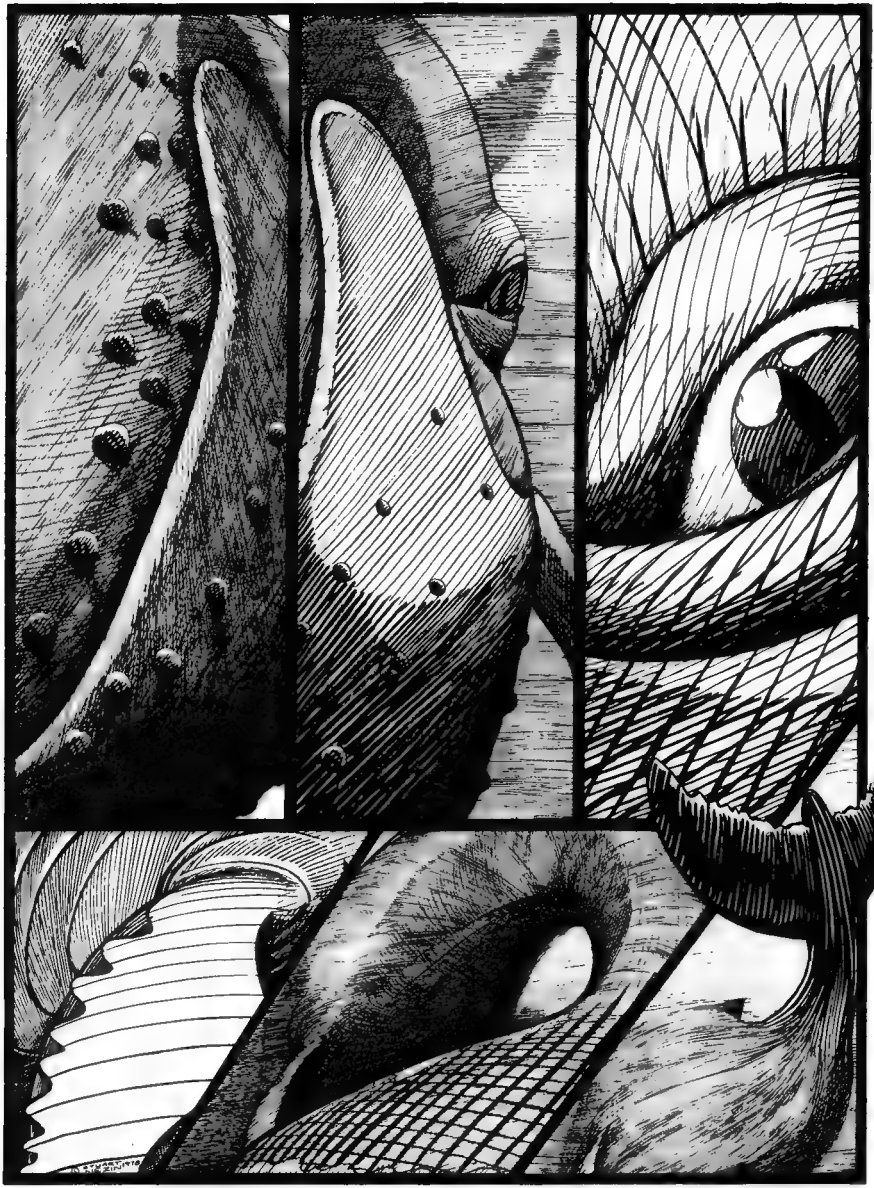

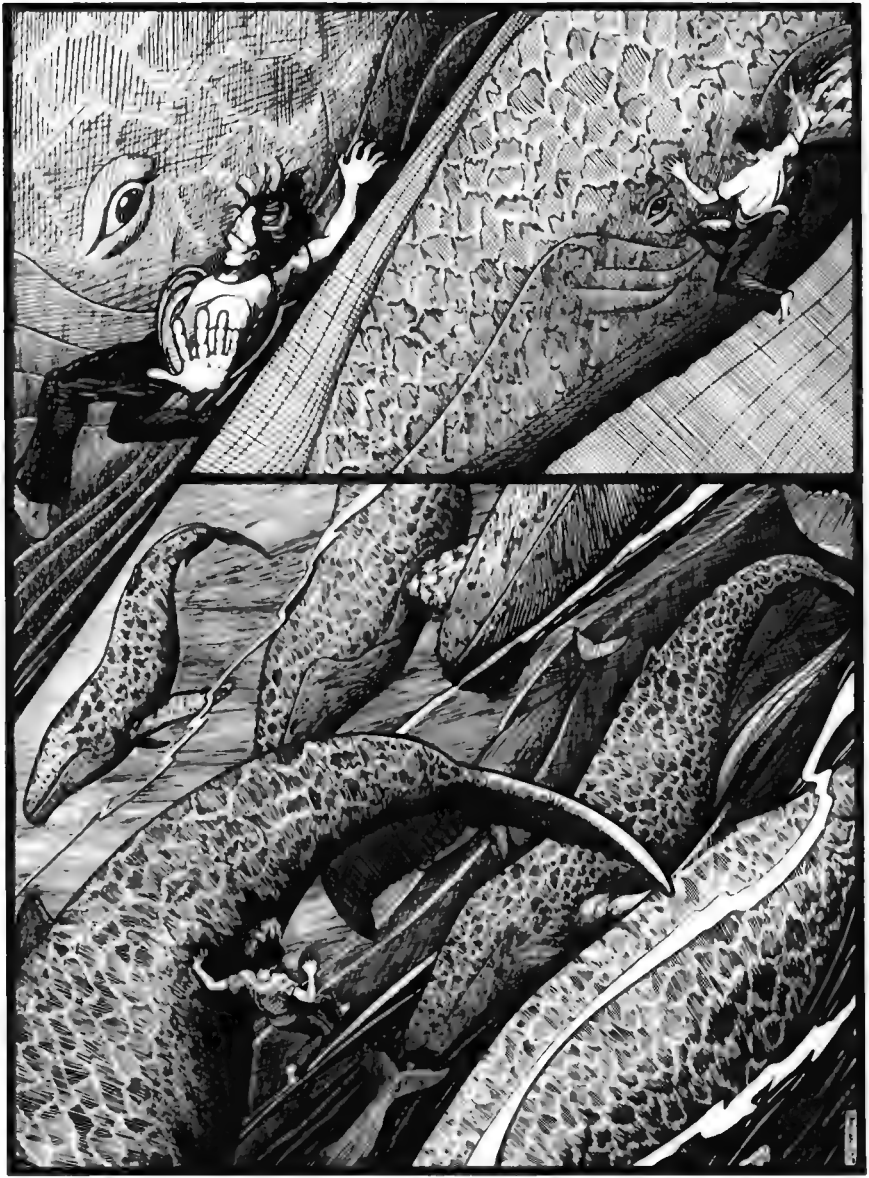

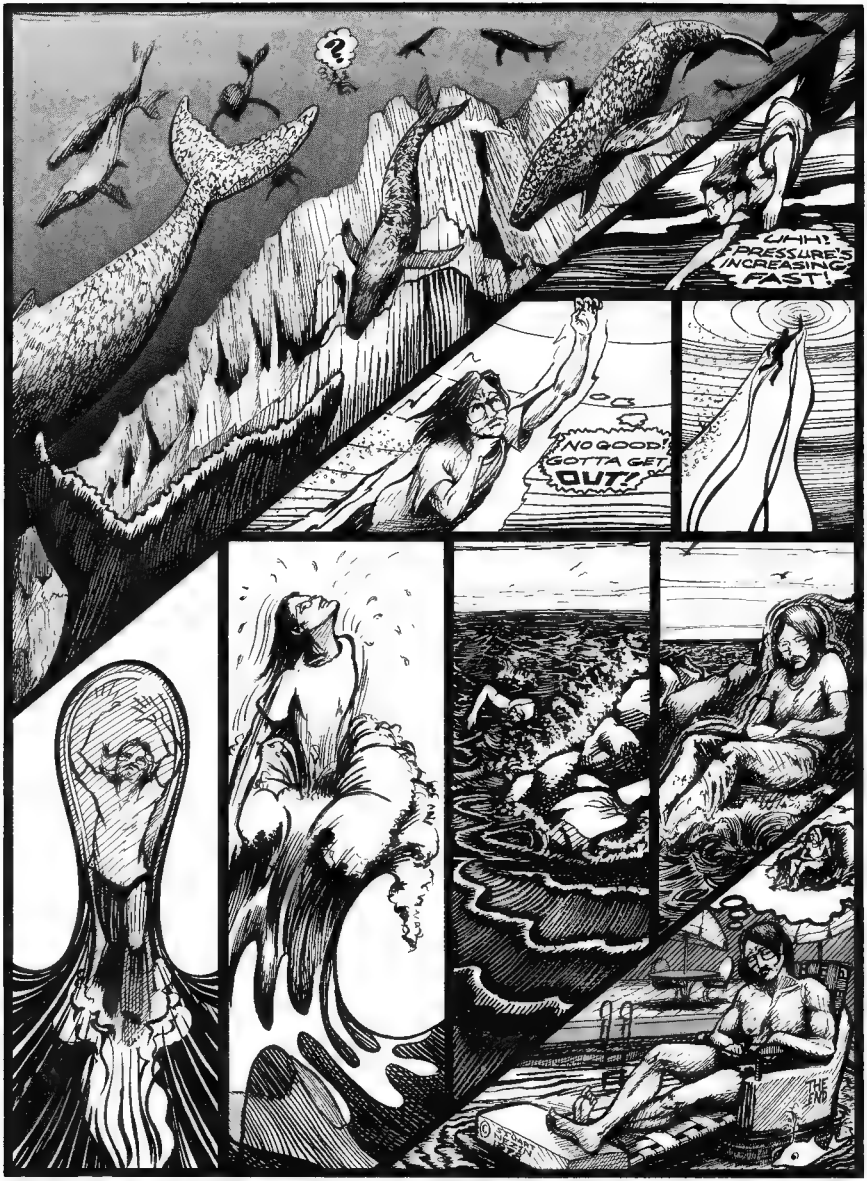
?
UHH! PRESSURE'S INCREASING FAST!
NO GOOD! GOTTA GET OUT!
THE END

"Flan, let me take the *Wing* up now. Corona's flyers will be on us in a moment. There is nothing to be done. We have to get out of here."

"Take me back over, PEW!" he said, the words catching in his throat. *"I want to see it again!"*

This time more bolts streaked up at them as they swept in from the northwest. Nova bursts flared so close that the *Wing*'s screens went temporarily blind.

PEW held the ship steady as they passed over the center of the inferno.

What was once the soaring House of Sunheart was now a pillar of fire, a beacon of death in the night, hundreds of feet high, feeding on itself. The outpouring from the Armada guns both on the ground and circling overhead was so intense even the mounds of rubble were being glazed. Ilium itself seemed aflame, every crystal spire reflecting the conflagration. The air was thick with drones and two-man flyers.

Nothing could be alive down there.

Gone – all gone. Blackened and blown away. His father and mother, his brothers, the Sunheart dream of a peaceful Galactic Empire. Shattered, scorched, obliterated from the face of the planet, lost forever.

And he still lived –

Sunheart began to sob, his iron control finally breaking.

"I'll take her up, PEW," he whispered. "We'll go now."

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STARCROWN

Part V

BY JOHN POCSIK

A quiet departure from his home world, Ilium Prime, has turned into a fight for survival for Flan Sunheart, heir to the Starcrown. Laser bolts streak at the wildly weaving screamcar in which he is riding, giving him little time to think of the family he has just left in its time of need.

At the spaceport, he finds that Lord Nekron Corona's blacktroops have apparently seized control. Narrowly escaping death, Flan aims his ship for the flashes coming from the city.

Sunheart gasps in unbelieving horror: far below, his father's palace, wracked by explosions, is a pyre of blinding light in the darkness.

Rising above the stubby, low-altitude craft, the *Omega Wing* lifted in shallow ascent jumps that took them within minutes up over Ilium's iceless polar cap into the secret safety of darkside. They drifted into the silent reaches of space.

Flan Sunheart sat slumped at the controls, unaware of anything around him. His face was ashen; damp strands of hair hung lifeless into his hollow eyes.

If I had only stayed, he kept repeating to himself; *if I had only stayed. . . .*

Gone, all gone –

The receiver lit up to reveal a smoke-blackened face Sunheart recognized immediately: Polonius Gaul! He jolted forward, fumbling frantically for frequency resolution, daring to hope.

The image softened, sharpened, split apart, reformed. The old man's face was lined with pain – and despair. He could hear his labored breathing.

"Flan Sunheart," the hoarse voice called across the void. "We who are still secure in the treasury stronghold are beaming this signal to you as we track your ship. The jammers will cut us off soon, and Burrowers are even now drilling their way in. Listen: attend what I have to say!

"Flan Oros Sunheart, your House has fallen; the family I have served for generations survives only in you. Your father was gunned down mercilessly as he tried to move your mother to safety; the Sunhearts have

perished, prey to a coward's attack from the night. I've no doubt it was planned knowing full well you would not be here with us. The author of this murderous deed is Lord Nekron Corona, of the House of Mord – "

Sunheart shuddered, his face twisted in pain as guilt stabbed through him anew.

The image faded, came back.

Gaul turned, as if he had heard something behind him.

"Repeat that name. Corona. CORONA. **CORONA!** Let it become *your* goad, the brand firing your resolve, because your House still lives within you. You are the last of the line, but your father told me many times he thought you would turn out to be the best ruler the House had ever produced. Heed my counsel now! Seek out the Starbolt fleet lying beyond Orion's Light. Its commander – Viridian Macronta – is unswervingly loyal to the Starcrown. He will know what has to be done, and when that has been accomplished, you will return to avenge your family's murder and free Ilium from the clutches of the traitor who has brought this ruin down upon us tonight."

Gaul's image beaded, blurring toward painful brightness. The old man's lips still moved, but Flan could hear nothing in the static roars. Tears were rolling down Gaul's cheeks.

" – bring back the glory, the hope of the Starcrown to us. . ." came to him faintly.

The old man suddenly disappeared from view, as if chopped down,*and was replaced by the stern visage of Nekron Corona himself!*

If he lived and fought for a thousand years in a thousand world-campaigns, Flan Sunheart knew that he would never forget this instant– the cruel face, the hooded gaze, those full red lips, the eyes burning beneath the shadowing cowl that was the symbolic garb of the leader of the Mord.

Nekron Corona himself – probing, searching the interspaces –

For him!

The face of the hunter: cold, implacable, without pity. The face of the genius-assassin.

Sunheart cried out in anguish a second time as he smashed his fist against the screen.

"Flan?" PEW asked in concern.

But Flan Oros Sunheart felt nothing, saw nothing, heard nothing –

Except the eyes of the hunter, hungering.

Except the voice of Gaul, fading –

He slammed the *Omega Wing* into star-drive, targeting on Orion's Light. . .

Sensing those hard,probing eyes at his back.

2: AGAINST THE USURPER!

". . . at which time a young exiled Mord named Nekron Corona began to make his influence felt throughout the City.

Solitary, enigmatic, and remote, trained on the frontier world of Doran 144, he enrolled in the Imperial Academy at a very early age. By diligent work and an exemplary field record, he rose swiftly through the ranks, becoming – toward the end of the Behemoth struggle – the Federation's most brilliant techno-tactician.

That he was also a ruthless campaigner whose unorthodox strategems – particularly in the shadowy area of world acquisition – caused diplomatic perturbation was not denied; yet, ironically, he was a tool both the Sunhearts and the Galactic Federation could hardly afford not to utilize.

Corona was eventually named sole Imperial Commander of the most potent military force in that sector of the Whorl system.

But the dark threads of twisted Mord ambition were stitched deep into the fabric of his being Refusing to set foot on Ilium Prime because of alleged political and philosophical differences with Emperor Alidin Sunheart (q.v. *Sunheart, sovereigns*) he initiated a grand scheme to erode Sunheart power. He began to play court noble against court noble and eased his most trusted men into secure positions in both the military and commercial sectors.

Polonius Gaul (q.v.) blocked his maneuverings many times in an ongoing duel of wits, but in the end Mord's regent proved to be the more cunning by bringing about the ultimate coup against the Sunhearts of which his House had been dreaming for more than half a millennium . . ."

From *The Fall of the Sunhearts: A Document of Rebellion,* by Joahnnes Kıscopıcus, p. 232

"I crown you now – "

Six degrees, heading three zero two, and closing.

" – Flan Oros the First – "

Target clusters at interfaces one-six, one-seven, one-eight –

" – Plenipotentiary Supreme and Adjudicator Imperex of the Ilium Federation of planets – "

Load and lock all flash weapons. Release first safeties.

" – First Lord Sovereign of Ilium Prime – "

Formation leaders, maintain minimal contact with flag. Branch wings, space yourselves out.

" – Protector of the House of Sunheart –"

Estimate encounter time –

" – Defender of the Starcrown!"

Flan Sunheart closed his eyes. The words, their meaning, the import of Viridian Macronta's chanted intonations still echoed in his ears.

Ten "days" had passed, ten days of space-time and idle orbiting while they waited for the far-flung Starbolt commanders to bring their cruisers in at Macronta's emergency summons.

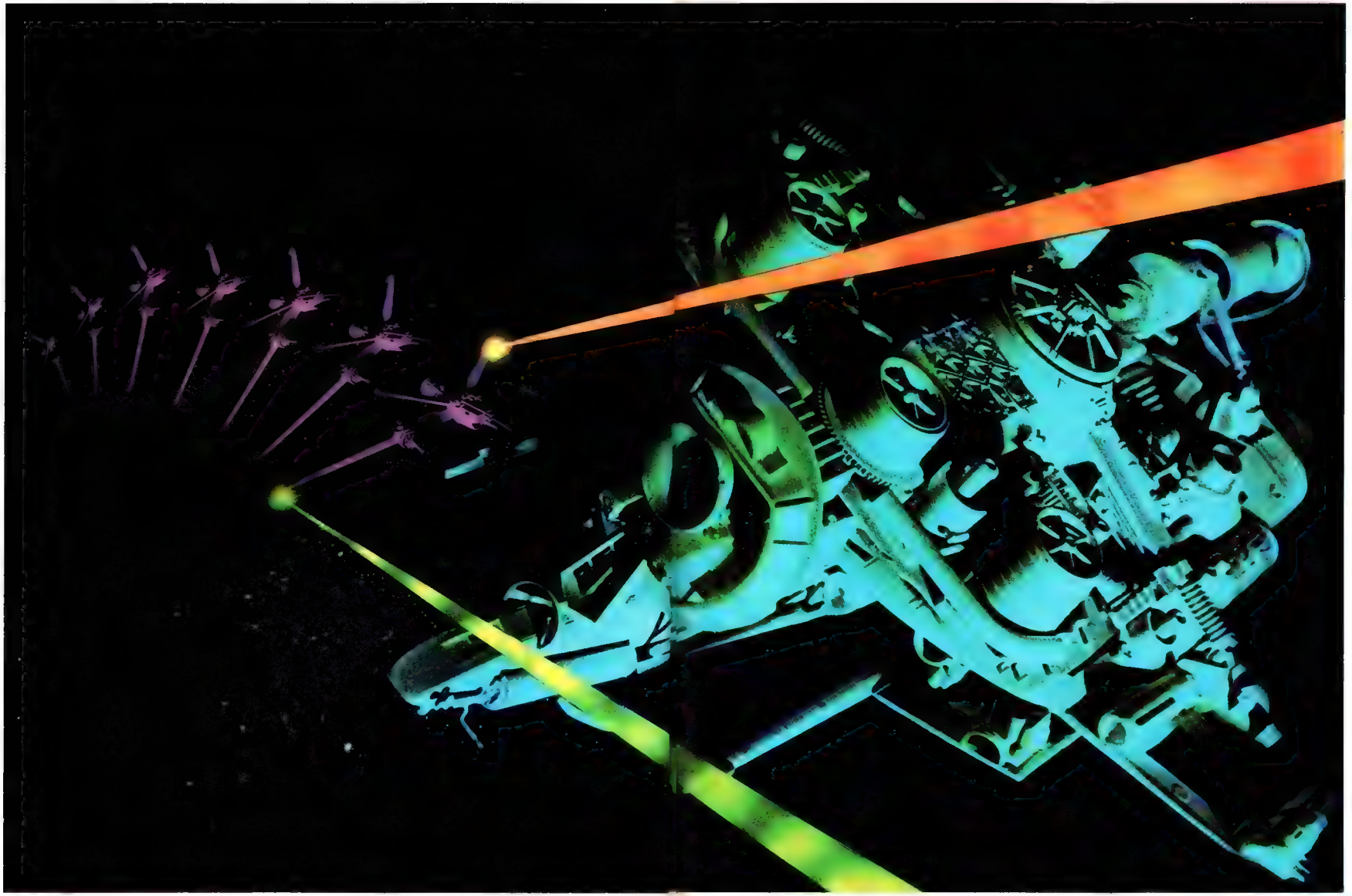
Ten days – or ten lifetimes ago.

He would never be the same.

They had all assembled on the multi-tiered hangar decks of Macronta's flagship ten days ago – officers and loyalists alike clad in Sunheart yellow – to hear the news of the outbreak on Ilium, and to witness the transition of power, the unbroken line of succession they had pledged an oath to defend.

Bathed in the filtered glare of Ilium's twin suns, they had watched as Commander Macronta approached with the Starcrown – beamed from the shattered treasury – burning in his hands. For each light-mote that twinkled so brilliantly within those jeweled depths, a world spun – a galaxy-blaze of worlds on the verge of revolution and war once again.

That realization was the most sobering, the most disturbing Sunheart had had to face during the waiting time. While he found it



hard to accept the loss of his family and his home planet, far more difficult to accept was the weight of responsibility for the billions of beings and entities he must now protect from the threat of Nekron Corona.

He glanced down at the deck vault; the electronic lock shimmered *in flux,* secure in its interdimensional state. Within reposed that fabled circlet, symbol of Sunheart authority, its ultimate power both on Ilium and over the Galactic Federation.

He shivered slightly, thinking of the awesome power inherent in that priceless object of gemstone and metal.

Like the Sunheart dream, it could never be destroyed.

The Starcrown: his now, by right of succession, if not yet by rite of passage.

The computer chattered as the *Wing's* boosters counteracted Ilium Prime's growing gravitational pull. No time for mourning now, or the brooding reflections that had plunged him into dark silences for days: the Starbolt squadron was flashing toward the nexus where it would meet the long-awaited enemy.

Because he had requested, and then directed it, the *Omega Wing* sped down the starry corridor at formation point, heavily armed and force-shielded, with Ilium swelling vast and misty overhead.

Flan Sunheart stretched as best he could, the crash-chair's coils tightening rigidly about his lower body. His eyes never strayed from the three console screens,which showed the approach patterns, quadrant, and declination determinants of the grayish blobs of light that were the first of Corona's Grand Armada coming into range from behind the ice satellite.

And Corona?

Sunheart smiled for the first time in days. *My Lord Corona is a cautious huntsman: he will send the hackers and hounds in first, and will himself stay well out of the fight. The key to success then will rest on maximum territorial penetration of the enemy force.*

He punched for a scenario.

PEW disengaged from the targeter. His harsh laughter filled the cramped cockpit with raspy iron notes.

"Hell of a note, ain't it – to be crowned king of kings, lord of a thousand worlds one minute, and then having those bandits out there trying to burn you the next."

The youth looked up from the glowing attack plan. That elusive smile slipped across his face once again. "Ever the glib turn of phrase, eh, uncle PEW? I'm thinking of reprogramming you for eloquency. Well, as it so happens, if I get burned, so do you."

Rendezvous in mark nine minutes, repeat, nine minutes flying time, his concussion-helmet whispered. *Gunners, activate full ship and body armor at this time. Switchover from computer to manual control.*

"You are undoubtedly correct, your imperial majesty – particularly when I take into consideration such random and negative factors as the fact that you shoot even more poorly than the troops of Eyeless Imeron."

"Crank off, PEW! I've no time for your

synaptic jests. Make yourself useful and check out that radial ovoid detron tube in the starboard armature. Seal integrity reading is slightly below normal; the hydraulics must be leaking again."

The warbot whirred away and could be heard banging about somewhere in the back. Flan concentrated on the screens, watching as the gray shapes defined themselves on the glass, crossed the first of the colored grid bands. Sensors disclosed that long-range scans were being run against them, but at this distance even the most powerful pi-gamma units would be ineffective.

Apparently the Armada was going to stick to standard operating procedures, sending flankers out to sweep in from the sides and rear.

SCAN:

Heavy destroyers and cruisers, for the most part. A few stasis boats in case warp maneuvers might be required. Each of the ships out there would hold its complement of flyers and drones of all types, with which Corona had rewritten the strategies of Galactic warfare.

SCAN (Detail):

Class A craft – total, forty-five. Nearly impregnable fortresses with long-range capabilities and the armament to destroy worlds or fire suns to nova.

Class B ships – number as yet undetermined. Less sophisticated, more vulnerable, but also more maneuverable.

Ranged against them, the Starbolt Wing of the Armada (now classified as rebels or renegades – take your pick) consisted primarily of one cruiser, two destroyers, and a number of Class C light fighters and attack craft. The odds were not exactly in their favor, but assuming they could withstand the probe waves Corona would open with, he and Macronta had determined on a swift, relentless strike into the heart of the Armada formation. Effective though their shields might be, the enemy ships could not cover every hole. A lucky hit on Corona's flagship – so the tacticians said – might prove the pivotal point of the battle.

Take out the leader, you stop a war.

Theoretically.

Take out a killer, and you have –

Revenge!

Again young Sunheart remembered the glitter of the Starcrown in Macronta's space-chapped hands, the sharp *clack* as five-hundred laser rifles crossed ceremonially, the answering *click* of a thousand boot heels.

To the death, then!

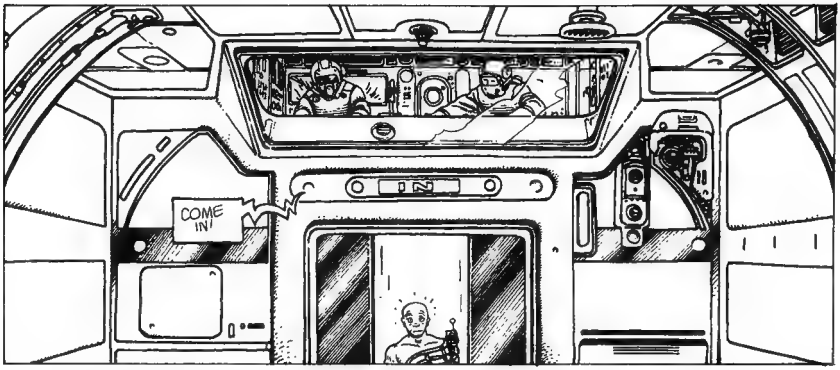
For Sunheart, and the millions!

Comreps sounded incessantly now. The *Wing's* computer assimilated the ongoing influx of data, transmitting it instantaneously to the readout for Flan to make his course adjustment.

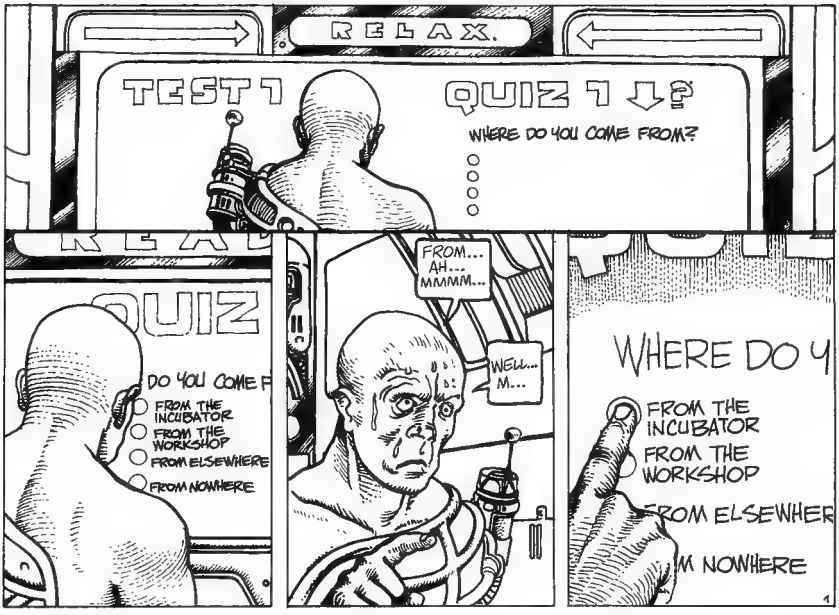
The *Wing* lifted high above the formation, leaving the Starbolts a faint glimmer far below. The stars – quiet fire, and eternal – flowed slowly past the windows.

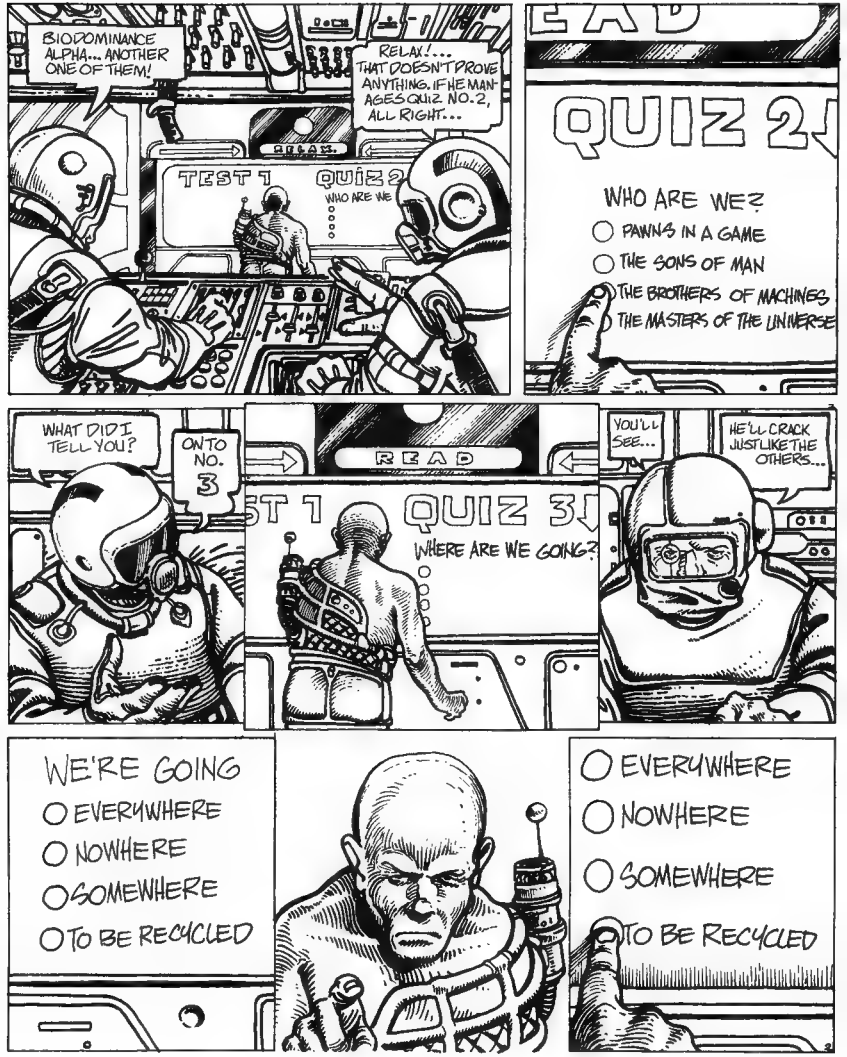
"Take the guns, PEW; back me up. Watch our rear. I expect the first probes will be coming from that direction."

To be continued ...

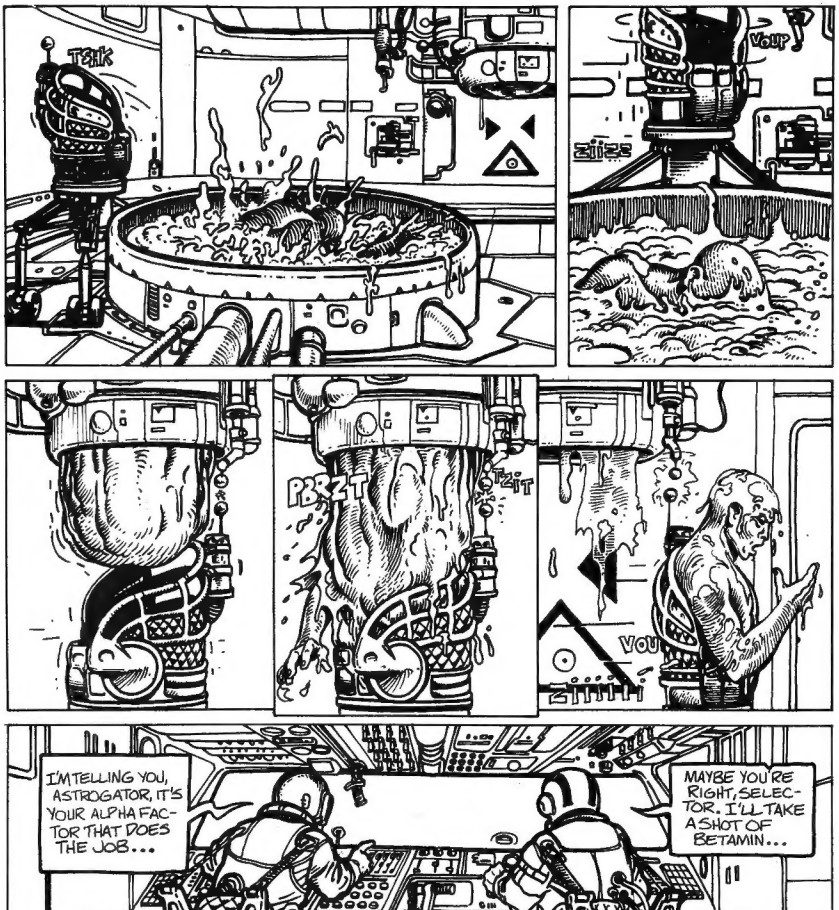


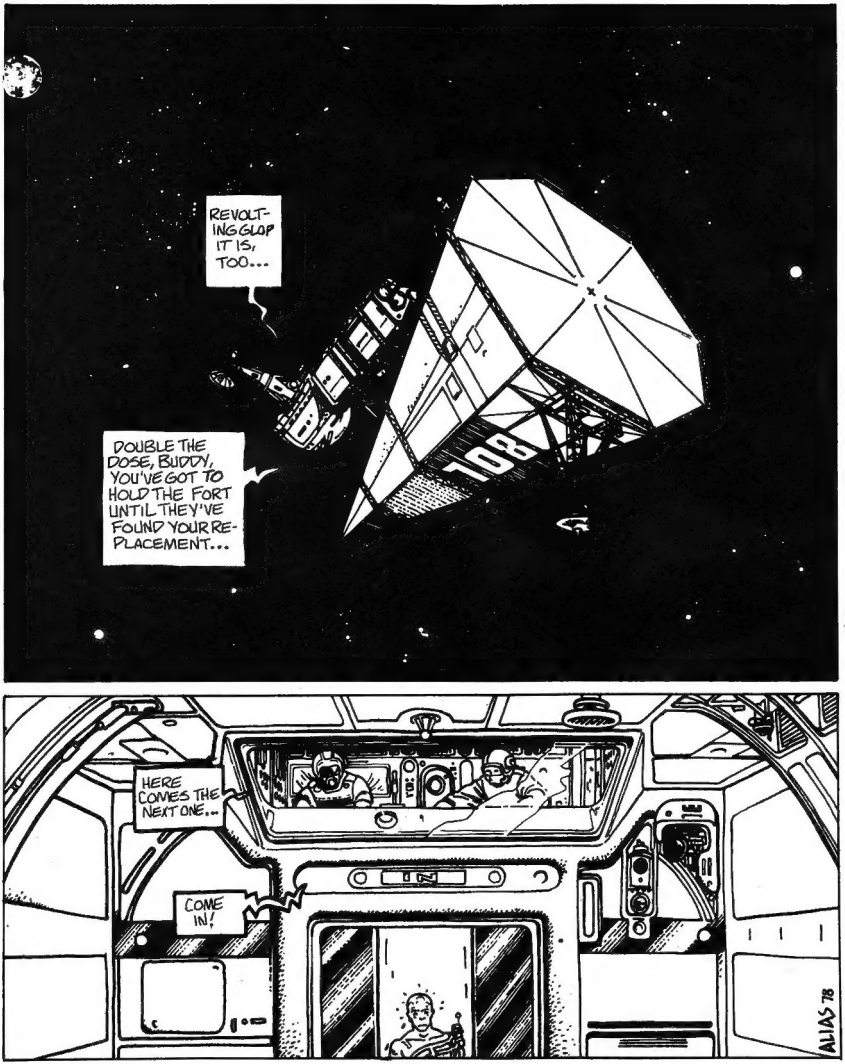
ONLY CONNECT - MULTIPLE CHOICE




BIODOMINANCE ALPHA... ANOTHER ONE OF THEM!
RELAX!... THAT DOESN'T PROVE ANYTHING. IF HE MANAGES QUIZ NO.2, ALL RIGHT...
TEST 1 QUIZ 2
WHO ARE WE
READ
QUIZ 2
WHO ARE WE?
PAWNS IN A GAME
THE SONS OF MAN
THE BROTHERS OF MACHINES
THE MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE
WHAT DID I TELL YOU?
ON TO NO. 3
READ
QUIZ 3
WHERE ARE WE GOING?
YOU'LL SEE...
HE'LL CRACK JUST LIKE THE OTHERS...
WE'RE GOING
EVERYWHERE
NOWHERE
SOMEWHERE
TO BE RECYCLED
EVERYWHERE
NOWHERE
SOMEWHERE
TO BE RECYCLED

A PHI-OMEGA! SHIT! THEY'RE RARE!
HE MUST BE A SOLDIER FROM THE THUNDER ARMY!
THE WAR'S OVER, BUDDY! WHAT WE NEED IS AN ASSISTANT ASTROGATOR FOR THE SUB-SPATIAL NIGHTSHIFT...
ALL THE SAME, A PHI-OMEGA ... ARE YOU TAKING HIS POTENTIAL INTO ACCOUNT?
ALL I KNOW IS THAT WE NEED A RIGHT-HANDED ALPHA-BETA-PLUS, CLASS 3 TO 5.
TIK
AND THAT IS THE TWENTY-SECOND ONE WHO COULDN'T MANAGE THE FIRST TEST.
BEEP
BEEP
TUCK
LUCKILY THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF THESE DUMBOS IN THE LAB...


TSHK
VOUP
ZIIIS
PBZT
TZIT
VOU
ZIIIIII
I'M TELLING YOU, ASTROGATOR, IT'S YOUR ALPHA FACTOR THAT DOES THE JOB...
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, SELECTOR. I'LL TAKE A SHOT OF BETAMIN...
4


REVOLTING GLOP IT IS, TOO...
DOUBLE THE DOSE, BUDDY, YOU'VE GOT TO HOLD THE FORT UNTIL THEY'VE FOUND YOUR REPLACEMENT...
108
HERE COMES THE NEXT ONE..
COME IN!
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